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AND

# FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

**STRIKING HIS GAIT;**  
**OR, THE PERILS OF A BOY ENGINEER.** *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"What does this mean?" gasped the conductor, gazing down at the two figures bound hand and foot to the rails. "Great Scott! It's a hold-up!" cried Joe, as four ruffians with rifles appeared from the shelter of the brushwood.

# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# STRIKING HIS GAIT

OR,

## THE PERILS OF A BOY ENGINEER

By A SELF-MADE MAN

### CHAPTER I.

JOE MANVILLE AND ENGINEER HOBBS.

"What in thunder are you doin' here?" roared Jason Hobbs, as he swung himself up into the cab of one of the big locomotives standing in the roundhouse of the Green River and Darien Railroad.

"Getting this engine ready to go out," replied Joe Manville, a fine, strapping lad of eighteen, looking up at the engineer of No. 23.

"Oh, you are, eh?" snarled Hobbs. "Who told you to do that?"

"Mr. Galway."

"The master mechanic?"

"Yes."

"What's the matter with Benson?"

"I believe he's been laid off."

"Who told you he had?"

"One of the machinists."

"Well, I don't want no boy to fire on my engine. Understand?"

"Then speak to Mr. Galway about it."

"Speak to the Old Scratch about it!" howled Hobbs.

"Get out of the cab!"

"Sorry, sir, but I'm obeying orders."

"Don't care nothin' about your orders. Get off!"

Joe made no reply, but went on with his work.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why don't you do as I say?"

"Because I was put on this engine to fire, and I'm going to do it unless I get different orders."

Jason Hobbs glared down at the resolute boy as though he would liked to have floored him with a blow of his ponderous fist, but he knew better.

He knew in his heart that Manville must have received orders from headquarters to fire No. 23, or he wouldn't be there.

At the same time he rebelled at the idea of having a boy take the place of his crony Benson.

Besides, he was down on Joe, anyway.

The boy, after putting in a year as a wiper and general assistant at the roundhouse, had for the past three months been firing a yard engine, run by Abe Morris, a man against whom Hobbs entertained a mortal grudge, and any one who had had any dealings with Morris was obnoxious to the engineer of No. 23.

Besides, he had an antipathy for boys in general.

He didn't like to see them get ahead.

This was especially the case with respect to Joe Manville, who, on account of his uncommon smartness and aptitude, had been advanced over the heads of several of the old wipers and firemen.

This had brought down on the lad's head the jealousy and ill-will of several of the men he had supplanted.

He was an ambitious boy, and had gone into the railroad business with the intention of getting ahead as fast as he could.

He had a widowed mother and sister to support, and he wasn't letting any opportunities to better himself get away from him.

He hoped to become an engineer some day, and the only way to reach that goal was to work for it.

His politeness, even disposition, and willingness to make himself useful without waiting for direct orders, had made him a general favorite in the yard; but there are some men who never can or will see things in the right light, and these were the men who cherished a grudge against the young railroader because he got ahead where they couldn't, although they enjoyed the same opportunity to make good as he did.

Birds of a feather flock together, and Jason Hobbs chummed in with that kind of men who could see no good in smart boys.

Consequently, he was ever ready to back up any grievance cherished by the kindred spirits in whose company he passed much of his off time.

Joe Manville's luck in getting advanced was often the subject of discussions in his presence, and though he himself had nothing against the boy, he disliked him on general principles, anyway.

Now it appeared that Joe had been promoted to a steady job as fireman, otherwise he wouldn't have been put on No. 23, which hauled through freight over the Mountain Division, between Green River and Dalmatia.

"I suppose you're one of the old man's pets," sneered Hobbs, as he proceeded to don his overalls and jumper, still undecided in his own mind what to do about this new and undesirable fireman.

He knew there wasn't any use complaining to the master mechanic at that stage of the game, for his sharp eye could detect no flaw to pick in Joe's preliminary work.

"I never heard that Mr. Galway had any favorites," replied Joe, quietly.

"Oh, you're mighty innocent, ain't you? Do you s'pose he'd put a boy like you on this engine if you wasn't a favorite of his?"

"Why not, if he thinks I understand my business?"

"I don't believe you understand how to fire worth sour apples."

"I've fired for Abe Morris——"

The mention of that man's name to Hobbs was like waving a red flag before an angry bull.

He swore like a trooper for several moments, and consigned Morris to a pretty warm locality.

"That's one reason why I don't want you on my engine," he said, furiously. "I don't want anybody 'round me who has been helpin' that cuss."

"I'm sorry you hold that out against me. I don't see that Mr. Morris has anything on you. He's only a yard engineer, while you're——"

"Humph!" growled Hobbs, somewhat mollified by the subtle bit of flattery conveyed by Joe's words. "So you're willin' to admit that he isn't in my class, eh?"

"I've heard that you were one of the best engineers on the road," went on Joe, following up his cue.

"I reckon I am," nodded Hobbs, complacently, regarding his new fireman with more favor, for Joe had hit upon his weak point.

"When Mr. Galway told me I was to fire for No. 23 I was glad to hear it, because I want to work under a first-class man."

"That's where your head is level, young feller. I could make an engineer out of you in no time if I chose to help you along. What did Morris say about me while you was with him?"

"Nothing."

"Nothin'!" growled Hobbs. "Don't you try to hood-wink me, for it won't go. He's always knockin' me. Calls me a pounder."

Jason Hobbs had that reputation through the yards, and the boy knew it.

He had spoiled the chances of more than one fireman who had been put on his engine by ways that are dark, but which every engineer understands.

There was no way of getting back at him, either.

He could run his engine so she would lose time in spite of the best efforts of the most capable fireman.

The victim might know it, too, but he couldn't help himself.

The report at the end of the run would show against him, and that counted.

Joe hadn't told the exact truth when he said to Mr. Hobbs that he was pleased when he found he had been assigned to No. 23.

As a matter of fact he would rather have been attached to any other engine in the company's service.

He knew that Hobbs would be prejudiced against him from the start, and he thought he saw his finish in advance.

Joe felt that his only show lay in dealing diplomatically with the engineer.

He had heard that Hobbs liked to be flattered above all things, and he determined to make the most of the man's weakness.

"I never heard Mr. Morris call you a pounder," said Joe. "It's my opinion that a man of your superior ability as an engineer would scorn to be a pounder."

"Now you're talkin' sensible," replied Hobbs. "I could break any fireman that ever shovelled coal. I could do it in one trip between here and Darien. But, unless I had my knife into him real hard, I wouldn't."

"That's what I thought," answered Joe.

"Young man, maybe we'll get on together, after all. I won't say but I took a grouch ag'in you because you got on faster than I thought you ought to. Some of the boys think the same, and they've pulled you to pieces for it. I reckon, however, you are pretty smart—smarter than a lot of the chaps, and that accounts for it. If I find you can hold your end up, I won't allow anybody to knock you while you're with me. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, we'll run out on the table. Ring."

The engineer glanced at the gauge, Joe pulled the bell-rope and then Hobbs opened up a bit and let off the brake.

No. 23 ran out of the roundhouse, and was switched on to a certain track down which she ran backward to the long freight shed, where she was coupled to the train of box and flat cars waiting to be carried over the mountains to Darien.

## CHAPTER II.

### FIRING A FREIGHT.

At length Hobbs got the signal to go ahead.

He gave the throttle a pull, the steam shot into the cylin-

ders, the ponderous wheels began to turn, and the long train began to move toward the entrance of the yard.

Part of Joe's duty was to pull the bell rope until the train got beyond the town limits.

He did not forget to watch the steam gauge to see that it did not drop off.

He was determined that Hobbs should have all the steam he wanted.

Therefore, as the train pulled up the valley toward the distant mountain range he got down to business and swung his shovel as regular as clock work at frequent intervals.

Firing any engine is no fool job, but it is particularly arduous work to keep steam up on a big locomotive that is pulling a heavy freight train, especially on an up-grade.

Hobbs had little to say after the train got under way.

He leaned one arm on the cab window, kept his head out the window and his eyes and attention on the track ahead.

He had recovered from his ill-humor, and Joe began to hope that things would work smoothly for him.

A couple of miles out of Green River they passed a gang of section hands working on the road.

Joe knew the foreman of the gang and waved his hand to him.

The man was surprised to see the boy firing on a regular run and stood stock still, staring at him.

The train swept by and Joe began to swing his shovel again.

"How long have you been on the road, Manville?" asked Hobbs, speaking almost for the first time since leaving the yard.

"About sixteen months, sir."

"And you've been firing in the yard three?"

"Yes, sir."

"Expect to be an engineer some day, I s'pose," said Hobbs, with an odd grin.

"I hope so."

"Did Morris give you any points?" the engineer went on with an ominous growl.

"A few."

"Let you run the engine up and down the yard occasionally, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was about all, I s'pose?"

"No. He posted me on a good many points."

"For instance?" grinned Hobbs, malevolently.

Joe had been well coached by Abe Morris, and could run a locomotive better than most firemen, but he saw by Hobbs' look that he had better not admit the extent of his knowledge, so he mentioned only a few things he had learned from Morris, and those of the least importance.

"Humph!" growled Hobbs, with a look of satisfaction. "That lobster didn't hurt himself with what he put you on to. Mebbe I kin do better'n that in case we hitch."

Had Joe enlarged on what he had learned from Morris, Hobbs would never have taken any interest in putting him wise to many things that would have been useful for the young fireman to know.

"I should like to learn all I can," said Joe, slamming the furnace door shut after several minutes of brisk shoveling. "I know considerable about a locomotive and the handling of one from a theoretical point of view."

"Huh! Been readin' it out of books, I s'pose?"

"Yes, sir. I've studied a book on locomotive engineering."

"Humph! Studyin' books ain't no good; what you want to do is to study an engine, then you'll learn somethin'."

Nevertheless, Hobbs was curious to know what the boy had learned from his book.

He asked him a whole lot of questions, and was more than surprised by the ready answers that Joe returned.

In spite of his reading, a large part of these questions would have been like so much Greek to the boy, but for the practical information he had gleaned from Abe Morris.

Hobbs, however, took it that his young fireman had gained all his knowledge out of books, and he was rather astonished.

He had never read a book on the subject, nor any other subject, for that matter, for he entertained a contempt for such modes of instruction.

He had worked his way from a wiper to his present position through the ordinary practical channels, and he was ready to swear, and with some truth, that such was the only way anyone could become an engineer.

After catechising Joe till he was tired, he rather grudgingly admitted to himself that there might be some good in books when backed up by practical experience.

Hobbs relapsed into a long spell of silence again, and Joe divided his time between glancing out of the cab window on his side, whistling for crossings and shovelling coal into the furnace's greedy maw, mostly the latter, for it seemed to the boy that, like "Oliver Twist," it was always asking for more, and the moment it was neglected the gauge called attention to its voracious appetite.

It was not a particularly warm day, but the heat of the furnace and the violent exercise of coal-heaving brought the perspiration out in great drops on the boy's face.

He was not used to such a continuous performance, and by the time the train was fifteen or twenty miles west of Green River nobody could tell him that he had not been doing the work of his life.

His arms ached from elbow to wrist, but there was no such thing as a let-up in his labors till the engine was brought to a standstill at a water tank and coal station.

Then he had to catch the dangling pipe, swing it over, insert the hose end into the well of the tender and start the water on.

While he was thus employed Hobbs took out his pipe, filled and lighted it, and lay back on his seat with a look of content.

A few minutes later he pulled ahead to the coal shute, where another job awaited the perspiring young fireman.

Joe was satisfied that he was earning his wages that day, but there was worse ahead when the train took the long up-grade into the mountain range.

The firebox door and Joe's shovel was kept on a continuous swing to maintain steam up to the required mark, until Hobbs whistled for the switch at a long siding, where the freight had to wait for a west-bound passenger train that was following them.

Joe was mighty glad to get a rest, though he would have been ashamed to have admitted the fact.

Hobbs regarded him with a malicious kind of grin as he pulled up at the further end of the siding.

"I reckon you know you've been workin'," he chuckled.

"That's what I expect to do," replied the boy, cheerfully.

"Firin' a freight engine ain't a bed of roses, is it?"

"No," admitted Joe.

"Wait till you git further up the mount'ins, and mebber you'll feel like askin' to be put back in the yard."

"No, sir," replied the boy, squaring his jaw. "You'll never hear me squeal over hard work."

"We'll see, we'll see," chuckled Hobbs, sucking at his pipe. "I like your grit, anyway," he added after a pause. "I dunno why I like you. I didn't mean to. I don't mind tellin' you that I didn't intend that you'd come this way twice with me."

"Why not?"

"Because I didn't want you on the engine."

"I may not be on over a week, anyway."

"Who said so?"

"No one, but I'm sure I'm only filling in for Benson."

"Benson be blowed!" returned Hobbs, much to Joe's surprise. "I reckon I don't want him no more. You seem to be good enough for me. You know how to keep your trap closed till you're spoken to. Benson was always shootin' off his jaw. He's a lush, too."

As Hobbs could crook his elbow as well as the next one when off duty, Joe was rather astonished to hear the engineer refer to his old crony as a lush.

He hardly knew what to make of Hobbs.

He had faced about in a most remarkable way that morning.

As far as Joe could make out Hobbs was treating him uncommonly decent so far for him.

It was not at all like him, and the boy wondered how long this would last.

Hobbs got out his oil can and descended from the cab to oil some of the cups.

Joe took another and walked out through the narrow window on to the equally narrow platform that ran alongside the long boiler, and oiled up some of the parts in that direction.

While they were thus employed the whistle of the passenger was heard down the track, and presently she came spinning along.

The train passed the freight at a thirty-mile clip on the up-grade, and as soon as she was past the siding the switchman opened the track for the waiting train.

Joe resumed his coal shoveling and Hobbs pulled out onto the main track.

From that point on to the summit of the range, through some of the wildest kind of mountain scenery, the young fireman had his work cut out for him.

Rest only came when the freight got on the down-grade toward Mountain View, where another stop had to be made in order to leave a clear track for the west-bound express.

### CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH ENGINEER HOBBS COTTONS TO JOE MANVILLE.

"Hello, Joe," said Sam Calder, a husky, plain-looking lad, who had just been promoted from a wiper's work to Manville's former job of firing Abe Morris' camelback engine. "When did you get back?"

"Last night, about ten," replied Joe.

"Your run takes you to Dalmatia?"

"That's right."

"You've got the hardest work on the line, over the mountains."

"You can bet it's hard, but I guess I'll get used to it after a while."

"You expect to hold on, then?"

"Why not?"

"Well, you ought to be able to guess what I mean. You've been put on No. 23 with Hobbs."

"What of it?" replied Joe, coolly.

"What of it? Suffering sixpence! One would think you'd just come on the road. You know what Hobbs' reputation is?"

"Yes."

"And he chums with a push that's dead sore on you, which makes matters worse."

"Think so?"

"Do I think so? You've got a load of friends in the yard, old man, but there isn't one who expects to see you hold your job over two or three trips."

"Have they got such a bad opinion of my abilities as that?"

"It isn't that, as you ought to know. It's Hobbs. He'll break you as sure as your name is Joe Manville."

"He will?"

"Yes, he will. Did you get in on time at Dalmatia?"

"To the minute."

"And wasn't you reported for anything?"

"Not to my knowledge."

Sam whistled softly and looked at his friend pretty hard. Evidently he was surprised.

"How about the return trip? How did things go?"

"I haven't any kick to make."

"Didn't you have any trouble keeping up steam?"

"No more than I might expect over a tough grade."

"And you got here on time?"

"We did."

"You don't mean to say that you didn't have any trouble with Hobbs at all?"

"That's what I mean to say."

"Well, upon my word, if that doesn't beat the Dutch!" ejaculated Sam, scratching his sandy head, while a puzzled look rested on his good-natured features.

The two boys, who were great chums ever since they became acquainted in the yard, had met at one of the doors of the roundhouse.

Both were on the way to begin their day's duties—Sam to get No. 16 ready for her day's work in the yard, and Joe to prepare No. 23 for her next trip to Dalmatia, which was the end of what was known as the Mountain Division.

The second, or Western Division, went on to Darien, the terminus of the road where it formed a junction with the A. & P. trunk line, for points further south and west.

Joe's promotion to firing on the freight had been a great surprise to Sam, as it had been to Joe himself.

There were a score of other firemen in the yard whose experience and length of service would seem to have entitled them to precedence over Manville when there was an opening, and yet the master mechanic turned them all down in favor of the boy.

Sam was glad to learn that his friend had been advanced, although he remained a wiper still himself.

He was more glad, however, when he found himself singled out to fill Joe's late job on No. 16.

But when he heard that Manville had been put on No. 23, which was Hobbs' engine, he felt that his chum was up against it hard, and that his days on the through freight were almost certain to be few.

It wouldn't take Hobbs more than a trip or two to do up Joe, or any other fireman that he didn't want on his engine, and his antipathy towards new firemen, not to speak of boys, was well known throughout the yard.

Sam had been anxious to meet his chum as soon as he got back from Dalmatia in order to find out how he had fared during his first run, expecting to hear the worst, for one of the wipers had overheard the scrap between Hobbs and Joe when they met first on the locomotive, as detailed in the opening of our story, and he had circulated the news, so that there was not a man about the roundhouse who did not see Manville's finish.

Therefore, when Joe came along, looking as serene and undisturbed as a boy well could, and, in reply to Sam's questions, had stated that nothing had happened to upset his chances of a continuous service in his new position, Calder was decidedly nonplussed.

Joe laughed at the peculiar expression on Sam's face.

"So you thought my name was mud, did you?"

"I don't understand how you pulled through so well," replied Calder. "Maybe the old villain is only holding back so as to give you a bigger jolt when you aren't expecting it."

"I don't think so," replied Joe. "If he is up to such a game he's a past-master in the art of dissimulation."

"But you had a run-in with him before you left the roundhouse, didn't you?"

"Who told you that?"

"Frank Daly. He says he heard Hobbs jump on you like a carload of bricks, and order you out of the cab."

"I won't deny it! But I didn't leave, just the same."

"Of course not. How could you when you had your orders? But the boys expected that Hobbs would do you on the trip to Dalmatia."

"He made no attempt to injure me in any way. In fact, as far as appearances go, he seems to have taken quite a shine to me. He told me on the run back that if Benson is put back on his engine he'll raise a howl to the master mechanic."

"Well, wonders will never cease! However, you needn't be afraid that Benson will interfere with you. He came into the yard drunk again to-day, and was told to put in his time."

"Then he's been discharged?"

"That's what he has."

"I'm not surprised. He's had warning enough."

"He wanted to know who went out in his place on No. 23, and when he learned it was you, I heard he swore like a pirate, and made threats against you and the road, too."

"He'll find himself in jail if he doesn't look out."

"If I was you I'd look out for him. He's nothing to be proud of when he's sober, but he's as wicked as sin's back door when he's full of bad whiskey. He might try to do you an injury."

"I'm not afraid of him."

"That's all right, but I advise you to be on the safe side."

The boys then separated and went to their respective engines to get them ready for business.

The wipers about the roundhouse and not a few of the machinists were full of curiosity to learn the outcome of Joe's first trip on No. 23.

Several of them came up and interrogated the boy as he went about his work.

What they learned surprised them as much as it had done Sam.

One chap, who had been a wiper ever since he came into the company's service, that was five years since, and seemed destined to stay a wiper as long as he remained in the yard, shook his grizzly head in an ominous way.

"Hobbs is just playin' with yer, like a cat does with a mouse," he said, solemnly. "He hasn't got his repertation as a pounder for nothin', mark ye. Many a good chap he's sent up salt river to my knowledge, and don't ye imagine yer goin' be an exception. If ye get through the balance of the week it's more'n I think ye will."

"I don't intend to give Mr. Hobbs any chance to find fault with me," replied Joe, pausing a moment in his work.

"Yer don't have to give him a chance. He'll find one himself, never fear. He'll do ye, as sure as the sun shines. He's the cussedest chap that ever——"

"Hold on, Snorkey," interrupted Joe. "Don't run a man down behind his back. Mr. Hobbs is all right, and until he treats me unfair I won't stand to hear him abused."

It happened that Jason Hobbs had approached his locomotive unobserved by either Manville or the wiper.

He overheard the remarks made by Snorkey, and the reply given by the boy.

He slipped up and, grabbing the wiper by the neck of his shirt, swung him around till they stood face to face.

"So you think I'm playin' with the boy, do you? Think I mean to do him, eh, you flannel-mouthed lobster? Call me a pounder, will you? I've a good mind to break every bone in your body. And I will, too, if I ever hear another word out of your trap. Git, now. You ain't got no business around this engine. Git, before I pulverize you!"

He flung the wiper from him, sending the man staggering against the drivers of a nearby engine, and then grabbing the cab handles swung himself up and, without noticing Joe, even so much as to say good morning, which had never been his custom toward any of his firemen, he commenced to don his working clothes.

Joe turned away and continued his work, while Snorkey slouched away from the spot.

Hobbs remained silent a long time that morning, until the train pulled in at the first coaling station.

When Joe had pushed the coal shute back out of the way and was about to return to his side of the cab, the engineer stopped him.

"Here," he said, with a smothered growl, "see if you kin run her out."

Then he stepped away and gave up the lever to the astonished boy.

Joe looked at him, as if he could hardly believe his ears, and then he stepped into the engineer's place and pulled the throttle.

It was no new experience for him, for he had run Abe Morris' camelback many a time, yet at that moment he recalled the startling sensation that had come over him the

first time he tried the trick under Abe's eye when he felt the engine start the instant he touched the throttle.

Then, though he had a general idea how the locomotive ought to be handled, he had felt much confused.

The throttle, reverse-lever and brake seemed to be in each other's way, and he could not find them with his hands without looking for them.

It was different now.

With the coolness of a veteran he ran the train out on the main track and gradually gave her steam on the up-grade.

Hobbs watched him narrowly and finally gave an approving grunt.

"You'll do, youngster. You've got it in you," he said, gruffly. "I'll make an engineer out of you before I've done with you. And that lobster said I meant to do you."

With that he seized the shovel and began to hurl coal in the furnace like he used to do years back, when he was still a fireman.

## CHAPTER IV.

### JOE MAKES A THRILLING RESCUE.

Hobbs allowed Joe to handle the engine for some time.

He also gave the boy a lot of instruction that was very valuable to him.

In fact, he showed much interest in the young fireman, and got on very friendly terms with him.

Altogether, Joe had accomplished the remarkable feat of getting on the right side of the hardest engineer in the service, something that no other fireman had ever succeeded in doing.

And this meant more for Joe than he had any idea of—it was really the making of him as a first-class engineer.

He learned many things from the man that he might never have picked up himself in a lifetime, and which were of great use to him when he became an engineer.

The freight reached Dalmatia at nine in the evening, and after supper at the boarding-house, frequented by the railroad men who had to lay over night in that town, Hobbs tried to induce Joe to accompany him to an adjacent saloon.

"You'll have to excuse me, Mr. Hobbs. I don't drink nor smoke, and I don't care to learn."

"I can't say that I blame you, Joe," he said, approvingly; "but you're bound to come to it if you remain in the railroad business."

"Why?"

"Because you'll often be overworked, and you'll have to take a nip to keep your strength up."

"I intend to keep as healthy as I can, and I guess a healthy man can hold out without taking to booze."

Hobbs shook his head as if he didn't agree with his young fireman.

"You'll find that there will come times when you're kept on the steady grind for the whole twenty-four hours, and sometimes longer. Then you'll know what it means to be fagged out. That's the time you'll be tempted to take a glass of whiskey to brace up on. It will put new life in you, and steady your nerves when they need steadyin'. When you see how it tones you up, and clears your befogged brain, you'll get into the habit of takin' it whenever

you're knocked out, and by and by you won't think nothin' of it."

"Yes, that's the trouble. A man begins because he thinks he must have a stimulant, and he goes on taking it when he doesn't need it until it gets to be a regular habit to take it at all times."

"That's a fact," admitted Hobbs. "But when about every chap you know takes his bitters pretty regular, if you don't join in it looks odd and unsocial like."

"I don't think it is necessary to drink in order to be social, Mr. Hobbs," said Joe.

"Yes, it is. When you're in a crowd and everybody lines up at the bar but you, just think how it looks."

"You can avoid that by keeping away from the saloon."

"But all the boys go there to talk and swap stories and experiences. If you stay away you'll be out in the cold, and first thing you know the men will fight shy of you. Your stayin' away will give them the idea that you think yourself above them, and if they get that in their heads you'll make enemies instead of friends."

"I don't believe your argument holds good except with a certain class of men. You've got to admit that drink holds many a man down. Drink cost your late fireman his job. I know lots of men who have lost their positions in the yard through it. No man can do his best work when under the influence of liquor."

"That may be, Joe, but it's pretty hard to teach an old dog new tricks."

"Well, if a fellow doesn't learn to crook his elbow when he's young there's a good chance that he won't be so easily led away afterward. I'm only a boy, and what I say probably doesn't cut much ice with older heads, but I'm opposed to drinking first, last and always. I don't mean to begin, and I promise you I shall stick as fast as cobbler's wax to that resolution."

"I hope you will, Joe. I wish I could break away from it, but I can't, and that's all there is to it. I never get exactly full, but I often get several sheets in the wind, and it doesn't do me any good, for I feel ugly, and do things I oughtn't to do. I might be on the express now, at better wages, if I could keep sober all the time. But what's the use of talkin'? The curse is on me, and some day it may be the death of me."

With those words Hobbs walked out of the room, and five minutes later was holding his end up at the nearest saloon.

Next morning No. 23, hauling the east-bound freight, pulled out of the Dalmatia yard and headed for the range and Green River.

Hobbs looked seedy about the eyes and was not inclined to talk.

He had taken more than his usual quantity of spirits the night before, besides several bracers that morning, and though that didn't seem to interfere with his efficiency as an engineer, it did not improve him in the least.

The train was running at an eighteen-mile clip across the level country that shone bright and clear in the rays of the morning sunshine.

They were rounding a sweeping curve that ended at a stout timber bridge across a side creek that took its rise somewhere to the north and eventually emptied into the North Fork of the Green River.

As the locomotive opened up the bridge, Joe, who was looking straight ahead, gave a gasp of consternation.

A little girl of five years was standing in the middle of the bridge with her back to the approaching freight, looking down into the water.

With great daring for a child of her years, she had left the footpath on one side and walked out to her present perilous position.

Hobbs saw her at the same moment, whistled down brakes, and reversed the drivers, but he knew well enough that the locomotive could not be brought to a stop before reaching the spot where the child stood.

The long line of freight cars bumped up against one another with a harsh, grinding sound, and their combined impact against the bumper of the tender shoved the locomotive forward and caused the drivers to loose their grip on the rails.

The child heard the whistle, looked up in a startled way, and then stood as if fascinated, gazing at the ponderous leviathan gliding down upon her.

Hobbs, his face pale as a sheet and his eyes protruding from their sockets, continued to whistle in order to scare the child from the track.

It seemed to be useless.

Joe, after his first sensation of consternation, sprang out of the window ahead, ran along the footboard, supporting himself by the brass hand-rail, till he reached and stood on the bumper to which the pilot was bolted.

From that point he waved his left arm energetically and shouted to the child to step onto the north track.

She either didn't understand him, or was incapable of movement, for she remained in her perilous situation.

Apparently the little one's fate was sealed.

The train could not be stopped before reaching her.

At that moment a thrilling scream broke on the air.

A young girl of perhaps sixteen came dashing towards the bridge.

She had heard the shrieking of the whistle and then caught a glimpse of the approaching train.

At the same time she had made out the child in the middle of the bridge.

As the little one happened to be her sister, who had eluded her watchful eye, and for whom she was looking, she rushed frantically forward, hoping to be in time to snatch the child from the track.

But she was too far away to be of any use in that direction.

Then it was that Joe Manville formed a sudden resolution.

He had heard of the thing having been successfully done before, but at the best it was a perilous undertaking for him.

He let himself down on the pilot till his feet rested on the narrow piece of steel that formed the half-diamond shaped border of the heavy spokes.

Then he locked one arm around the pilot-brace and bent down and forward.

His intention was to clasp the child with his other arm and haul her upward.

The act had to be executed with great expertness or the child and Joe himself were likely to be drawn under the locomotive in the fraction of a moment, and crushed to pieces.

Joe, however, wasn't thinking of his own peril.

All his thoughts were centered on averting the threatened catastrophe, and saving the child's life.

Hobbs couldn't see what his fireman was doing from his place in the cab, as the boy was hidden by the long boiler.

He threw his bent arm across his eyes to shut out the end as the locomotive glided down on the child, while he muttered something between an oath and a prayer.

The moment passed, but there was no crunching jolt as the engine sped on.

At the critical second Joe caught the child and threw himself back against the pilot.

The locomotive swept on at gradually decreasing speed until it came to a stop opposite the crouching figure of the little girl's sister, who, with wildly distended eyes, had witnessed the little one's thrilling rescue at the last moment.

## CHAPTER V.

### DANGER AHEAD.

As Joe stepped down from the pilot with the child, unharmed, in his arms, the girl by the roadside sprang forward with extended arms and met him half way.

"Nellie, my darling sister!" she cried, as Joe placed the frightened little one on its feet. "You are not hurt, are you?"

Nellie hugged close to her big sister and began to cry.

She had had the scare of her young life, but otherwise she was all right.

"How shall I ever thank you enough," cried the girl, clasping Joe by the hands. "You saved my sister's life. She would have been killed—crushed under the locomotive, but for you."

"That's all right," replied the young fireman. "I am glad I was able to do it."

"You are so brave! You might have been killed yourself."

"It happened that I wasn't, so it's all right."

"You will tell me your name, won't you?"

"My name is Joe Manville."

"Mine is Emily Harford. We live at that farmhouse yonder. Do you come up and down the road regularly? I suppose you must, as you are attached to the locomotive."

"Yes, I'm fireman of No. 23. I live in Green River."

"Father will want to see and thank you for saving little sister."

"Oh, it isn't necessary, Miss Harford. I only did my duty."

The conductor now came up from the caboose to see why the train had been brought to a stop.

Joe explained the situation to him, and the official complimented the boy on his heroic deed.

"You have saved the company a whole lot of trouble and expense," he said. "When I turn in my report I will see that your conduct receives the recognition it deserves. Return to the cab now."

"Good-bye, Miss Harford," said Joe, raising his cap. "I hope I may have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"You must call and see us if you can find the chance. Promise me you will."

"I will be glad to, if circumstances should permit."

Joe climbed into the cab, and Hobbs, having received the signal to proceed, started the engine.

Miss Harford waved her hand at Joe, and the boy returned the salute, until the locomotive was some distance ahead.

"She's a mighty nice girl," thought the young fireman. "I should like to know her better."

He was conscious that Emily Harford was one of the prettiest young ladies he had ever met, and he felt pleased that he had acquitted himself so creditably before her eyes.

She was bound to think well of him after what he had done, and he felt sure that he wouldn't forget her in a hurry.

His reflections were soon broken in upon by the engineer, who had been immensely relieved when he saw Joe step down from the pilot with the little girl in his arms.

He understood at once how the boy had saved the child, and he felt like hugging him on the spot, for it is a dreadful thing to an engineer to run down a human being.

"You're a plucky boy, Joe," he said. "So you went out on the pilot and picked her up?"

"Yes," replied the boy. "It was the only chance of saving her."

"Right you are. My heavens! I shall not soon forget how I felt when I thought I saw her go under the engine. I should have had the nightmare for life if I had killed her. Blame these kids! What right have they to get in front of a train?" he added, angrily. "I sha'n't feel like myself durin' the rest of this trip."

He mumbled and growled for several minutes and then relapsed into silence, while Joe grabbed the shovel and began throwing coal into the furnace.

Hobbs speeded the engine up to thirty-five miles or more to make up for lost time, for he had to make a siding some miles ahead to get out of the way of a passenger train that was almost on them from Darien.

There was no grade on that side of the siding, and the freight hummed along at a lively gait.

The passenger train was in sight when Hobbs whistled for an open switch.

The caboose of the long freight had barely passed out of the main track and the switchman had closed the switch before, with a rush and a roar, the passenger flew by.

Hobbs noticed that the last car displayed two small red flags which signified that another train was following, so, of course, he had to wait on the siding till that passed, too.

An hour later they stopped at a water station to take on coal and water and then started to climb the grade up the mountains.

"Who was that gal you were talkin' to at the bridge?" said Hobbs, speaking for the first time in nearly two hours.

"That was the sister of the little one we nearly ran down," replied Joe.

"Humph! I thought she was a relative. Thanked you, of course, for savin' the kid's life?"

"Yes. She was very grateful."

"I should think she would be. What was the kid doin' out on the bridge?"

"I suppose she was looking down into the water."

"She could have done that as well from the footpath," growled the engineer. "But young ones will always go

where they oughtn't to. I'd like to spank a little sense into that one. Where does she live?"

"In that big farmhouse that stands well back from the road a quarter of a mile from the bridge."

Joe turned away to shovel more fuel, and while he was thus engaged he noticed Hobbs take a small, flat flask out of his breast, unscrew the metal cap and take a long swallow of its contents.

This wasn't the first time he had done it since leaving the bridge, but it was the first time that Joe had caught him at it.

The boy slammed the furnace door and, leaning on his shovel, said:

"Is that whiskey, Mr. Hobbs?" he asked.

The engineer hastily returned the flask to his pocket and scowled at Joe.

He knew that the boy had it in his power to report him, in which event he was likely to be called on for an explanation, with the strong probability of a layoff to follow, if not a discharge, for the company's rules were very strict on that point.

"If I were you I'd throw that flask out of the window," said Joe, quietly.

"I've got to have somethin' to brace up my nerves. They're all gone since that affair at the bridge. If you report me I'll——"

Hobbs' eyes were bloodshot, his voice was thick, and his face ugly.

"You know I won't report you, or at least you ought to know it."

"I've treated you right, so you ain't got no call to," almost snarled the man.

Joe saw he was in no shape to talk to, and made no reply.

He also saw that Hobbs was driving the engine at a higher rate up the grade than was customary at that point.

"More coal, the gauge is droppin'," said the engineer, thickly.

Joe glanced at the gauge and saw that it was not dropping, but he found he had to work harder to keep steam up to the mark.

He looked doubtfully at Hobbs, who was swaying somewhat in his seat, and gave other indications that the liquor he had imbibed was taking complete hold of him.

With a drunken engineer at the throttle the boy began to fear some mishap.

Hobbs soon began to mutter unintelligibly.

Occasionally he turned around and glared malevolently at his fireman.

The whiskey he had drunk aroused all the bad impulses of his nature.

As the moments flew by he pulled the throttle out further until but for the heavy weight No. 23 was dragging up the mountains the train would have been racing at express speed.

As it was, the freight was humming along at a clip that astonished the conductor and crew.

Suddenly, with a hollow roar, the train plunged into one of the tunnels that traversed a spur of the range.

The grade was very slight in it, and the cars acquired additional speed.

It was like passing through the fabled caves of Erebus, the darkness was so intense during that short run.

The train soon dashed out into the open air, circled a pronounced curve at a speed contrary to regulations and plunged into a second tunnel beyond.

Joe was now decidedly nervous over the actions of the engineer, and there wasn't any doubt but that the train hands felt that something was up.

When the freight came out of the second tunnel it encountered a steep grade, which the train climbed in fine style, but Joe was kept on the hustle with the coal shovel, for Hobbs was continually blinking at the gauge and glowering at the boy.

The engineer finished the bottle and flung the flask out of the window.

He had the throttle out to its widest limit and kept the sand running so that the drivers would take hold right along.

One of the train hands came running forward over the tops of the box cars.

When he got to the end of the forward car next the tender, he halloed out something that the wind half choked back in his teeth.

Joe paused in his shoveling and tried to catch what he said, but couldn't.

He started to climb back over the coal, but Hobbs roared for him to come back, and he felt obliged to obey.

The man, finding that he couldn't make himself heard, climbed down the iron ladder fastened against the end of the car, swung himself onto the top of the tender and came forward to the cab.

"The conductor wants to know why you are running at such high speed," he said, stepping up beside Hobbs.

The engineer consigned the conductor and his messenger to a pretty hot place, and ordered the latter out of the cab. The man looked at Joe.

"He's as drunk as a loon. This is a pretty state of affairs," he said. "There is a short down-grade ahead. If he takes it at this clip, he's bound to shoot past the siding where we stop for the express, and we'll have to back down to it. The conductor will have to interfere, or there may be something doing."

The train hand returned the way he came to report, while Joe, more nervous than ever, continued to shovel coal into the furnace.

The boy now took frequent looks ahead.

He soon saw that they were approaching the top of that grade, and Hobbs made no effort to reduce speed.

To make matters more serious, there was a curve in the slope ahead, and it was by no means impossible that when the heavy freight took the grade down its speed would run up to such a pitch that when it swung around the curve the caboose and some of the cars might be torn loose and derailed, if not thrown into the ravine.

Satisfied that Hobbs didn't know what he was about, Joe touched him on the arm and called his attention to the outlook ahead.

The engineer shook him off with a fierce imprecation.

At that moment a man appeared on top of the ridge with a red flag rolled up in his hand.

He was not hurrying himself, as the freight, which had the right of way as far as the siding, a mile beyond, was not expected for some minutes.

He had come to halt it on the comparatively level summit

of the ridge, and then hurry on and stop the express on the up-grade.

When he saw the freight coming up not far away he ran forward shaking out the danger signal and waving it.

Hobbs paid no attention to it and Joe's hair rose.

The boy shook the engineer and pointed ahead at the man with the flag.

"Don't you see the danger signal?" he palpitated. "Shut off, Mr. Hobbs."

Hobbs' answer was to strike Joe a swinging blow that sent him reeling back against the other side of the cab.

Joe recovered himself almost immediately, but he felt there was a crisis at hand and that he must act on his own responsibility.

Hobbs was clearly in an irresponsible condition, and the boy believed that it was his duty to interfere at all risk to himself.

He rushed to Hobbs and tried to tear his hand from the throttle.

With a terrible imprecation the engineer turned upon him and grabbed him by the throat.

To do this he took his hand from the lever, and Joe's first act was to shut the throttle off, and his next to seize Hobbs' wrists.

Then a terrific struggle between them was begun.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A COLLISION AVOIDED.

They swayed to and fro about the cab and out into the tender.

Hobbs' hot, whiskey-laden breath enveloped the boy's face, while an insane glare shot from the engineer's eyes.

The man was clearly half crazy from liquor.

He seemed bent on choking his young fireman.

He appeared to have gotten the idea in his head that Joe was his old crony, Benson, for he addressed the boy by that name between his hoarse imprecations.

Apparently some old grudge against his late fireman had come to the fore, and he acted as if he wanted to settle it then and there.

Hobbs was as strong as a bull, but Joe was wiry and active as a young monkey.

The engineer tried to whirl the boy around and throw him back on the coal.

Although half-choked, Joe divined his object and nimbly evaded it.

Then he tripped Hobbs, who was not on his guard against such tactics.

The engineer fell heavily, struck the back of his head against the iron corner of the tender, and rolled on his side, unconscious.

Joe sprang to his feet, rushed into the cab and whistled down brakes.

He then moved over the reverse lever, and pulled on the throttle.

The engine had already passed the flagman, cleared the summit of the ridge and was beginning to descend the grade.

Joe could only see as far ahead as the curve, and to that point the line was quite clear for nearly half a mile.

The train, however, had only lost a small portion of its

momentum, and that would have been recovered and increased as soon as the heavy cars got to pushing one another down the grade, but for the boy's prompt action.

As it was, the speed of the train was such that, favored by the grade, the cars rushed on down at a rapid rate that promised to carry the freight around the curve before it could be brought to a stop.

Joe put on full steam and the drivers hummed around backward, doing the best they could to ease up the weight that was pushing the locomotive onward.

There was evidently something to be feared around the curve, but Joe had no idea what it was.

Every brake was set, and the cars swayed and jolted along.

Almost imperceptibly the momentum was being overcome as they approached the curve.

At length the locomotive swung around till the track as far as the blockhouse and the siding came into view.

Then the reason for the danger signal burst upon his vision.

The second section of the passenger, which had passed them at the siding down the mountain, was stalled on the main track between them and the siding ahead.

At a nice calculation Joe figured that it was a problem whether the freight could be stopped without the locomotive telescoping the rear coach.

He had to trust to luck, for he had done all he could to avoid a collision.

The heavy freight slipped along at decreasing speed until, to the boy's satisfaction, the engine came to a rest within a short distance of the coach.

It was a mighty narrow shave, and Joe uttered a prayer of thanksgiving.

Then he whistled for the conductor.

That official responded in a hurry, for he had been much disturbed by the report carried to him by the brakeman.

He also saw the stalled passenger train ahead and wondered what was wrong.

When he leaped up into the cab he found Joe bending over Hobbs and bathing his wounded head.

"What's the matter here?" he ejaculated. "Is it true that Hobbs is drunk?"

Joe hated to make the case any blacker against the engineer than it was already, so he didn't answer the conductor's question, but said he guessed Hobbs had a fit.

"The brakeman said he was drunk," said the conductor, with a gusty face. "But I don't see how he could be, for he was apparently all right when that little girl stopped us at the bridge. So you think he's got a fit? Never heard that he was subject to such a thing."

"He hasn't acted like himself since we came within an ace of running the girl down," replied Joe, thinking he saw a loophole in the engineer's favor. "That upset him a great deal, and he's been going from bad to worse ever since."

"Did you stop the train?"

"Yes. I whistled for brakes and reversed the moment Hobbs keeled over."

"It's lucky you got control of the engine when you did, for we only missed a collision with the passenger by a narrow margin. You seem to understand the locomotive pretty well for a young fellow."

"Yes, sir. I consider myself fully competent to run one."

"By George, that's fortunate. You have shown at any rate what you are capable of in an emergency. Your conduct will be properly represented to the train master. How did Hobbs get the cut on the head?"

"He fell against the corner of the tender."

"You look pretty well mussed up yourself. You must have had trouble with him."

"Nothing worth mentioning," replied Joe, evasively.

"How came those finger marks on your throat?" asked the conductor, whose sharp eyes caught the grimy impress of Hobbs' fingers on the boy's neck.

"That's where he grabbed me while the fit was on him."

"Tried to choke you, eh? He must have been bad."

"He didn't know what he was doing."

"I s'pose not. Well, you'll have to take the train to Green River, as you say you are competent to do so. I'll send you a man to fire. I must go ahead now to find out how long the track is likely to be blocked. All this will delay the express behind us, and there'll be the dickens to pay at headquarters when the news reaches the train master and division superintendent. I'll have Hobbs carried back to the caboose presently."

The conductor left the cab and hurried ahead to see the conductor of the stalled passenger train.

He found out that something had gone wrong with the locomotive, which the engineer and fireman were trying to patch up.

Most of the freight's crew came forward as far as the engine to ascertain the condition of Hobbs, whom the brakeman had represented as drunk as a boiled owl.

Several climbed into the cab and gathered around Joe and the senseless man.

"How came Hobbs to get so full?" one asked. "I didn't notice anything was the matter with him when we pulled out of Dalmatia."

"Who said he was full?" replied Joe. "He's had a fit."

"Oh, that's what ailed him? Bradley told us he was half paralyzed."

Joe didn't say anything.

"He doesn't look like a man in a fit," continued the train hand.

He bent down and caught a whiff of the engineer's breath.

"Fit or not, he's been drinking, all right. His breath would knock a horse down. I wouldn't be surprised if he had an attack of delirium tremens, and you took that for a fit. I guess this is his last trip over the road. The train-master won't stand for fits or a touch of the horrors in an engineer, even if the road is shorthanded."

By this time the express was standing on the summit of the ridge, and the flagman returned to report the fact to the two conductors.

In the meantime, the conductor of the freight was asked to explain why his engineer had not stopped at the summit, where he could have been temporarily switched onto the other main track and thus have allowed the express to close up on the delayed second section, which, as soon as repairs had been completed, would take the siding at the block tower and give the express the right of way.

Under the present circumstances the trains would have

to be maneuvered, causing added delay, before the express could get a clear track.

The conductor, of course, laid the blame on his engineer, whom he said had been taken with a fit, and the duty of stopping the freight had devolved on the fireman, who didn't have time to stop at the ridge.

The flagman, who was the switch tender at the tower, didn't help matters when he said that the freight was minutes ahead of its time and was driving ahead at unusual speed at that.

He said that no notice seemed to be taken of the danger signal until after the freight had passed him, and then he heard the whistle for brakes as the caboose vanished over the rise.

After that he went on a bit further and waited for the express, which he flagged.

When he returned as far as the ridge, and saw no sign of the freight, he had signalled the express to come on as far as the summit, where it now was.

Both conductors were not in a pleasant humor, and they said a good many things that conductors will say under the circumstances.

It took another half an hour to patch up the passenger engine so it could move on, and during this interval Hobbs was removed to the caboose.

There was no use of the second section taking the siding now, as originally contemplated.

It ran ahead till the last car passed the tower.

The freight, with Joe at the throttle, followed, taking the siding.

The express came on and stopped abreast of the freight, which then moved backward out of the siding and to the rear of the express, its place taken by the second section, thus leaving the main track free for the express, which resumed its way.

The second section followed, and the freight came on after.

Thus the difficulty was gotten around.

But there was trouble ahead for some people when the trains reached Green River.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JOE SEES BRIGHT PROSPECTS AHEAD.

Hobbs recovered his senses soon after the freight passed the tower, and when he found himself stretched out in the caboose he went on like a wild man.

He was in a fighting humor, and it took three train men to secure and tie him.

Joe carried the train through in fine shape, and the freight arrived in the yard at Green River on its customary time.

The reports of the conductors of the express and second passenger section were already on file in the train master's office, as well as the engineers' reports.

When Joe pulled into the roundhouse with No. 23 a messenger came up with orders for him to appear at the office.

He found the conductor and Hobbs there before him.

The latter had slept off his drunken fit, and his face showed that he knew he was up against it bad.

The train master was listening to the conductor's expla-

ation, as well as his statement of Joe Manville's plucky rescue of little Miss Harford at the bridge.

"Your report will be sent to the general manager," said the train master. "Now, Hobbs, what have you to say for yourself?"

The engineer had nothing to say, for he saw his finish anyway.

Then the official turned to Joe.

"I want your story, young man. You were in the cab and ought to know all that happened. Make it short and to the point."

Joe accordingly told his story, but he laid a great deal of stress on the averted catastrophe at the bridge, in which he himself had played so prominent a part, and tried to impress the fact on the train master that the shock had been too much for Hobbs, and had caused all that had followed.

"That's all very pretty, young man," said the train master, incredulously, and a bit sharply; "but the conductor says Hobbs was drunk. His statement is corroborated by three of the train hands. Don't you know a drunken man when you see one?"

"I don't drink myself, sir, and I haven't associated with drunken men," replied Joe. "If Mr. Hobbs was under the influence of liquor I should think he would have shown some evidence of it when we pulled out of Dalmatia."

"You claim, then, that the man was not drunk, but had a fit?"

"I claim that he acted as if he was not in his right mind," answered Joe, evasively. "The shock of the——"

"That will do. Now, Hobbs, I want a direct answer from you. Were you drunk or did you have a fit of some kind?"

"I had a fit, sir," said the man, taking his cue from Joe, who, he saw, was trying his best to square him.

"That settles it. We can't have a man on the road who is liable to be taken as you were to-day. You can come around for your time to-morrow."

"Which means that I'm discharged, I suppose?" said Hobbs, in a hoarse voice.

"You are. That's all, Mr. Pratt," waving his arm at the conductor.

That official took his departure, slowly followed by Hobbs, with bent head and sullen manner.

"One moment, young man," said the train master, as Joe was walking away. "You performed an act of undoubted heroism this morning by saving that little girl at the bridge, and I assure you that the company will not pass it over without suitable recognition. A report of the facts will be duly forwarded to the general manager, together with the conductor's account, of how you prevented a rear-end collision with the second section of Passenger No. 88, and afterward brought the freight through in good shape and on time. As the road is short of engineers it is not improbable that you may be placed in line for early advancement. That is all. Good night."

When Joe reached the humble cottage where he lived on the outskirts of Green River he had a long and interesting story to tell his mother and sister as he sat at the supper table, although the hour was eleven at night.

They were both thrilled by his account of how he had saved the life of little Nellie Harford at the bridge.

"My dear son, you took a terrible risk," said Mrs. Manville, with a shudder.

"Well, mother, I did it to save a human life, and she is as precious to her folks as I am to you and sister."

"True, my son; and I am devoutly thankful that Heaven carried you safely through the ordeal."

Then he went on and narrated his experience with Hobbs in the cab, and how he was barely able to stop the freight in time to avoid running into the stalled second section of Passenger No. 88.

Mother and sister had never before realized the perils of railroading as they did that night, and it may be that before they slept that night they more than half wished that Joe had chosen a less hazardous vocation.

When the young fireman reached the roundhouse next morning he was wondering who would take out No. 23 that day.

He started in with a light heart to get the engine ready, for the train master's concluding words the night before had greatly encouraged him.

He knew that the G. R. & D. road was not over-well supplied with good, reliable engineers who could be depended on to take a train through, day in and day out, without losing time and missing connections.

He felt sure that if he was given a chance he would make good, and the chance to which he was looking eagerly forward now seemed nearer than ever.

As the time approached for the new engineer to put in his appearance he grew more and more interested in the personality of the man.

"If I had my choice," he thought, "it would be Abe Morris. I'd be tickled to death to work with him again."

The thought was hardly expressed in his mind before the very man climbed into the cab and saluted him with a cheery good morning.

"Good morning, Mr. Morris," cried the overjoyed Joe. "Is it possible that you are going out on No. 23?"

"Yes, Joe. I am glad we have come together once more."

"You are not any gladder than I am, sir."

"We'll make a good team, you and me," said the engineer, beginning to unroll his bundle and don his jumper and overalls.

"First-class," laughed the young fireman.

"I've never been over the main line, and as you have been twice I'll look to you for points during the first trip."

"All right, sir. I'll post you to the best of my ability."

"And I'll return the favor by making an engineer of you."

He got the signal to run out, and in a few minutes they were coupled onto the west-bound freight and all ready to leave the yard.

"I hear you've been making quite a reputation for yourself," said Morris, when they were beyond the town limits.

"You refer to what I did yesterday, sir?"

"Of course. The news is all over the yard that you saved the life of a little girl at the bridge which spans a creek not far outside Dalmatia. You picked her up while hanging on to the pilot—a mighty risky and plucky feat."

"It was the only way the child could be saved."

"Yes, it was evidently touch and go with her. You're bound to hear from the general manager about it. I dare say the company will reward you, for you saved the road

several thousand dollars in damages. Then it appears you averted a wreck at block 13 by quick action. I was not surprised to hear that you brought the freight through all right afterward when Hobbs was knocked out. Even with your slight experience there are worse men at the throttle in the employ of the G. R. & D. Mark my words, the master mechanic will have his eye on you after this, and you may get an engine any time, for we are short-handed."

"That's what I'm looking for, though I don't expect to connect for some time yet."

"You can't tell. You have made great strides in the business, and, best of all, have attracted notice to yourself in the right quarter. That counts for a whole lot, I can tell you."

Morris then asked Joe to tell him the particulars of his previous day's experiences, and Joe did so.

"You needn't let it go any further, Mr. Morris, but Hobbs was crazy drunk. I did my best to shield him, but it didn't count, and he was discharged in short order."

"I'll bet he looked for it when he realized the situation. His offense was unpardonable with the company. He's a good man when he's sober, but he can't keep away from booze. Drink is bound to ruin any man in time."

"That's right," nodded Joe.

In due time they reached Dalmatia, and Joe took Morris to the boarding-house to which he had been introduced by Hobbs.

Next morning when they struck the bridge over the creek on their return trip Joe made out the flutter of a dress in the breeze at the other side.

Something told him who was inside that dress, and his conjecture was right.

Emily Harford was standing there, holding little Nellie by the hand.

Joe leaned out of the window on his side of the cab and waved his hand to the girls, though the salutation was meant wholly for Emily.

They saw him at once, and both waved their hands back. The little one danced and laughed, while Emily smiled in the most friendly way.

Joe raised his cap politely as the locomotive swept by, and Nellie kissed her hand to him.

The young fireman leaned out and watched them as long as they were in sight.

It gratified him very much to believe that they had come down to the bridge in expectation of seeing him.

As he was leaving the roundhouse that night a messenger came to him and said that he was to report at the master mechanic's office next morning at ten.

He was rather surprised at this, as the next day was Sunday and he was off duty.

Another surprise awaited him when the messenger handed him a plain envelope that had come through the mail, addressed to him in care of the company, and an official envelope bearing the imprint of the general manager's office.

The first had the Dalmatia post-mark, and he wondered who it could be from.

He opened the company's envelope first and found that it contained a brief note signed by the general manager, complimenting him for saving the little girl's life, and also for his subsequent services at the throttle of No. 23.

The manager concluded by saying that the part he played

in these important matters had been brought to the attention of the president of the road.

Opening the other letter with a good deal of curiosity, he found that it came from George Harford, Nellie's father.

He thanked Joe in feeling terms for saving his child's life, assured him that he would never forget the obligation, and concluded by inviting him to call at his farm whenever the opportunity presented itself.

There was a postscript from Nellie's mother expressing her sentiments on the subject, and a second postscript, very short, but satisfactory to Joe, from Emily.

When he got home he handed both letters to his mother and sister to read.

"You have made some very grateful friends, my son," said his mother, with a smile.

"How old is Emily?" asked his sister, curiously.

"She looks to be about sixteen, and she's as pretty as a picture," replied Joe, with considerable enthusiasm.

Mary Manville smiled to herself, for she could easily see that her brother was quite interested in this particular Miss Emily.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN ENGINEER AT LAST.

Next morning Joe reported at the office of the master mechanic.

He was immediately admitted to the presence of Mr. Galway, whose dictum meant a whole lot in that branch of the service over which he had charge.

The important official was seated at his desk in a little office off a reception-room, and Joe approached him as he might the Grand Mogul.

This was the second time that Joe had been in his august presence—the first occasion being the preceding day week when the master mechanic examined him as to his capabilities as a fireman before appointing him to No. 23.

Mr. Galway was writing at his desk when Joe was announced.

The boy had his best clothes on, and looked neat and clean.

The grime, and sweat, and grease of the engine cab were conspicuous by their absence.

The master mechanic looked him over critically from top to toe, just as he had done at their former meeting.

Joe stood respectfully, hat in hand, waiting for the autocrat to address him.

Mr. Galway seemed to be in no hurry.

He even turned to the window and looked out before he opened his mouth.

"You've been firing No. 23 for a week," he said, suddenly wheeling around and facing the boy, at the same time fixing him with his sharp eyes.

"Yes, sir."

"You appear to have given perfect satisfaction."

"I hope so, sir."

"You have also performed a praiseworthy deed in saving a little girl's life, and the freight conductor has given you credit for averting a smash-up on the down-grade between Lookout Ridge and Blockhouse 13. You carried the freight through from that point to these yards without a hitch."

Joe said nothing.

"It's the policy of the G. R. & D. to advance its employees as they demonstrate their fitness for promotion and the opportunity presents itself," went on the master mechanic. "It's an exceptional case that a young man comes to the front as quickly as you have. I myself am a believer, from experience, in the superior efficiency of young blood. We have been shy on capable engineers for some time—at this moment particularly so. I have sent for you to examine into your ability to take an engine."

The master mechanic then began to put Joe through a kind of third degree as to what he knew about a locomotive—its different parts and their functions; what he would do in case of a breakdown in certain parts if he was miles away from the shops; what he would do under certain conditions that were liable to happen at any moment along the line; and a hundred other questions connected with the subject.

Joe rather surprised him with the extent of his general knowledge on the subject, for the boy answered the majority of the questions correctly, and the others with an intelligent conception of what they implied.

"You appear to be uncommonly well informed for a boy who has had only three months' experience on a yard engine, and one week on the road. I expected to find you well up in a general knowledge of the duties of an engineer, as you have been strongly recommended to me by Abe Morris, but I hardly expected you to be equipped with such a complete fund of information. Where and how did you learn so much?"

Joe explained how he had been studying the locomotive from books while he was following the humble vocation of wiper and machinists' assistant in the roundhouse.

His duties had brought him into contact with the different parts of a locomotive, and he was enabled to verify what he had read and to acquire a great deal of knowledge not to be picked up between covers.

While helping the machinists repair broken parts he had used his eyes to the best advantage and learned how these things were done.

He had asked many questions of the machinists with whom he was brought into contact and, as a rule, found the men willing to give him the information he wanted.

Abe Morris had taken a special interest in pushing him ahead on the road which led to the goal of his ambition, and he had found out a whole lot from Jason Hobbs during their brief connection.

He said he possessed an excellent memory, and let very little get away from him.

As to the answers he had given with reference to what he would do under certain unexpected conditions, these were based either upon his own judgment, or upon arguments he had had with Mr. Morris touching upon such points.

Mr. Galway listened to him attentively, and when he had concluded, said:

"You will take a construction train out in the morning on the Spring Valley branch we are building to Montrose. Report at five o'clock. The foreman will give you an engine. That is all. Good morning."

Joe bowed and took his departure.

An engineer at last—he felt as if he was walking on air.

He hurried home to tell his mother and sister of his good luck.

"This means that until further notice I will be home every night, instead of every other night, like last week when I went to Dalmatia," he told his mother.

Mrs. Manville expressed her gratification at that fact.

"You'll miss one thing," said his sister, with a roguish smile.

"What's that?"

"You won't be able to see Emily Harford as often as you expected," she replied, for her brother had told her how Emily and her sister were at the bridge on the previous morning when the freight went by.

"That's so. I did not think of that," he answered, with a glum look.

He had been looking forward to the chance of seeing her every other week day morning with more or less regularity, and now that was all knocked in the head.

That afternoon he wrote to Mr. Harford, acknowledging the receipt of his letter.

He also wrote a note to Emily in which he stated that he had been promoted to the position of engineer, and that for a while to come he would be unable to enjoy the pleasure of seeing her as he had been hoping to do two or three times a week.

"I should like to have you write to me occasionally, if you will, and I promise to answer at once," he concluded. "I will call and see you and your parents at the first chance that offers."

When he showed up at the roundhouse in the morning the foreman said he was to take No. 44 out, and congratulated him on his promotion.

The engine was at the far end of the roundhouse, and when he climbed into the cab he was surprised to find his chum, Sam Calder, getting her ready for work.

"Why, Sam," he exclaimed, "are you going out with me?"

"That's what I am," grinned Calder, "and I'm mighty glad of it. I'll see that you have all the steam you want, don't you worry."

"This is a surprise, and a pleasant one," said Joe, getting into his working clothes. "How came you on the job?"

"I don't know. I was just picked out, I suppose."

"We're going to take a construction train up the new branch."

"So I heard. Just the right kind of a job for you to break in on."

"I like it much better than a yard one."

"I should say! There's your signal to take the table."

Joe ran No. 44 out of the roundhouse onto the turntable and thence onto one of the tracks connecting with the network in the yard.

In a few minutes they were coupled onto their train, got the signal to go ahead and were off.

"I suppose you feel like a bird now that you're a full-fledged engineer," said Sam, after slamming the furnace door to and mounting his seat on the opposite side of the cab.

"I know I should if I was in your shoes."

"Yes, I feel pretty good," replied his chum.

"I hope to be an engineer some day, too," said Sam.

"If I can help you get there, count on me, old man," replied Joe.

"Thanks. But I don't expect to have your luck in getting ahead quick. You're one out of a thousand, Joe."

Having a clear track ahead, No. 44 whisked the construction train down the main line to where the foundations of a small station reared themselves just above the surface of the ground.

Here the branch track was connected with the main one by a switch.

Joe stopped the engine till the switch was pulled over, and then started ahead again.

The flat cars, loaded with men, tools and material, followed No. 44 onto the branch, and Joe pulled out for a point six miles away, where the work was in progress.

The run was made in about fifteen minutes.

All day long Joe and Sam worked as they might have done in the yard, at pushing and hauling loaded and empty dump cars and flat cars, and such like.

On the whole, it was rather monotonous work.

Sam considered it a snap, as his share of work was light.

Joe evened things up by letting him take the driver's seat at intervals and lookout for signals.

Two weeks passed away in this way, and Sam was longing for something a little more exciting.

He got his wish about the middle of the third week, but in a way that caused his hair to rise on end.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DYNAMITE CAR.

The branch had been surveyed through a rocky spur of the mountains, and a considerable amount of blasting was now being done.

The explosives used were giant powder and dynamite.

A car containing a supply of this stuff was blocked up on a branch track at some distance from where the men were at work.

When the stuff was wanted the foreman would take a couple of men and a handcar and go and fetch the required quantity.

A big, red sign was pasted at each end of the car, reading: "DANGER—Dynamite."

The side track had something of a grade as far as the main track, but the spot where the dynamite car stood had been leveled down as additional security to the blocked wheels.

One morning a couple of seedy-looking, heavily-bearded strangers were seen hanging around watching the laborers at work.

They sat for a long time smoking on a boulder and only moved away when ordered by one of the workmen just before a heavy blast was set off.

Finally noon hour came around and all hands knocked off for dinner.

A short time before Joe tooted his whistle, which was the signal to stop and resume work, the two strangers disappeared into the thick bushes.

These bushes were particularly numerous all along the branch track and where the dynamite car was anchored.

Joe and Sam were seated on their respective seats, with their backs against the forward windows and their legs hunched up.

They were eating the lunch they had brought from home with them, and reading a newspaper at the same time.

The laborers, mostly Italians, with a sprinkling of other

nationalities, were scattered around that vicinity, in bunches, eating and jabbering among themselves.

The superintendent of construction, who had come down on a handcar from the main line a short time previous, was talking to one of his assistants who was in charge of the work.

They were leaning over a flat boulder on which lay spread out several blue-prints, which they were examining in connection with other documents.

Suddenly someone raised a shout of alarm.

A number of the Italians sprang to their feet and started to run to the track.

In a moment the hubbub and excitement spread and the greatest confusion ensued.

"Hello! What's the matter with the men?" said Sam, dropping the paper and looking out of the window at his elbow.

"Blest if I know," replied Joe, looking out his side.

"The lobsters are chasing themselves up the track and over the embankment as fast as they can put. There's something wrong."

At that moment Joe saw smoke rising up the branch track.

Suddenly a burst of flame appeared right close to the dynamite car.

"My gracious!" exclaimed the young engineer. "The bushes are on fire all about the dynamite car."

"What!" exclaimed Sam, aghast.

"Look for yourself," replied Joe, tingling with excitement.

"Gee whiz! You're right. There'll be an explosion in a little while that'll make the air blue up that way. It's a good thing the car is some distance away."

"Some distance away or not, that car is two-thirds full of explosive stuff, and there's no telling what the effect of an explosion will be."

"Hadn't I better uncouple from the cars so you can run up the track?"

"Uncouple by all means and then close the switch to the branch track."

"What for?"

"Don't ask questions, but do as you're told," said Joe, sharply.

Sam jumped out one side to uncouple, and Joe sprang out the other.

He ran over to where a number of sledge hammers were lying on the ground.

Seizing two he carried them to the locomotive and tossed them into the tender.

By that time Sam was closing the connecting rail of the branch track with the main track.

"You don't mean to say that you're going to run up to that dynamite car?" gasped Calder, as he stepped into the cab and saw Joe pull out the throttle.

"That's what I'm going to do."

"Thunderation! What's the matter with you? We'll be blown sky-high," and Sam turned pale and looked as if he was about to leap from the slowly-moving tender.

"Nonsense! That car is a stout one and sheathed inside with iron. The fire has only just got started. We're to pull that car out of danger."

"We can't do it. Don't you know that it's blocked?"

"We'll knock the blocks away."

"With what?"

"Those sledge hammers I just chucked aboard."

"Oh, lor'! We'll never be able to do it in time."

"I say we will," returned Joe. "We're not babies. A couple of heavy blows will do the business."

"I believe you've gone crazy!"

"Shut up, Sam, and be a man."

Sam gazed goggle-eyed ahead at the car, now enveloped in a cloud of thick smoke and apparently surrounded by a small sea of flame that was growing fiercer every moment under the influence of the breeze that swept that way.

"We'll never come out of this alive," gurgled the young fireman.

Joe said nothing more, but gave his whole attention to the business in hand.

In a few minutes he ran No. 44 right up within a few feet of the dynamite car.

The heat was now growing intense about it, and the wood was scorched and charred in several places.

"Grab a hammer and hustle," cried Joe.

Sam did so, though he was frightened almost to death.

They sprang out of the cab and dashed in front of the engine.

Their progress was temporarily barred by a sheet of flame that blew across the end of the car, setting on fire the warning sign, which blazed up and left only a few fluttering and darkened bits of paper for the breeze to play with.

"Now, then," cried Joe, energetically, "knock away that block on this side. I'll tackle the other. We'll have the car out of danger in a moment or two."

Sam obeyed in fear and trembling, and it took him longer than it did Joe to accomplish his part, though he was, if anything, the sturdier of the two.

Joe sprang onto the pilot, and from there to the foot-board.

"Couple onto the car, Sam, as I bring her up," shouted Joe, dashing open the window and stepping into the cab.

He gave No. 44 just enough steam to bring her up close enough for Sam to push the long coupling-bar of the locomotive into the socket of the car's coupler, and snap down the pin.

"All right," cried Sam, springing onto the pilot, and seizing the handrail. "Now scoot!"

Joe shoved the reverse lever from the center clear forward.

Then he seized the throttle and gave it a pull.

At the first hiss of steam the drivers spun around, their spokes glinting in the sunlight like jets of fire, and the locomotive backed away from the mass of burning bushes with great speed.

Joe shut off steam at once and applied the brake.

In several places the current of air had fanned little jets of flame into a small blaze.

"Take that bucket, Sam, and dash water over those blazing spots, and wherever you see the wood smoldering," said Joe.

Sam didn't lose any time in doing it, you may well believe, for as long as he saw a vestige of fire he didn't feel safe.

Although the bushes were now blazing fiercely, there was

no danger of the flames approaching that spot, as the wind was carrying it in the opposite direction.

While Sam was employed with the water bucket, Joe busied himself blocking the car wheels with stones.

Then he uncoupled, backed No. 44 down onto the main track, and replaced the switch as before.

"Whew!" exclaimed Sam, wiping his face, which had not yet recovered its normal color. "I think that was a close call."

"Yes," replied Joe, coolly, "it was close. I wouldn't care to go through it every day."

"I should say not. I'll have the nightmare to-night, I'll bet a dollar."

"What for?" laughed Joe. "It's all over."

"Yes, it's all over, but I ain't over it yet. I wish I had your nerve, upon my word I do."

"Then if you'd been in my place you wouldn't have pulled that car out?"

"Not on your life, I wouldn't" replied Sam, energetically. "I don't see how I ever went up there with you. You just made me, I guess."

"Well, don't let on you were scared, or you'll lose your share of the credit. Here comes the superintendent, his assistant, the foreman, and two helpers. Put on a bold front."

## CHAPTER X.

### PROMOTED TO THE NIGHT FREIGHT.

Mr. Bradley, the superintendent of construction, stepped up into the cab.

"Manville, I must say that was the pluckiest act I ever heard tell about," he said, grasping Joe by the hand first and Sam afterward, and shaking them both heartily. "You boys acted like heroes and you cannot receive too much credit for the part you played in saving the company's property under the most strenuous circumstances."

"We did what we thought was right under the circumstances," replied Joe.

"You couldn't have done better, and you undoubtedly took a desperate risk. I might say that you took your lives in your hands. I shall bring the matter to the attention of the general manager as soon as I return to the office, and you may rest assured I shall show you both up in the strongest light."

He shook hands with them once more and left the cab.

The foreman took his place and complimented the lads in no uncertain terms.

Now that the peril was all over, the laborers began coming back in a cautious way, casting fearful looks at the dynamite car, as if they were half afraid it might explode at any minute.

The noon hour was over by this time and Joe blew his whistle to notify the men of the fact.

"Say, Joe," said Sam, "it isn't fair that I should get as much credit as you. Why didn't you tell the super that you engineered the whole plan of saving the dynamite car?"

"Pooh! You held your end up, and were in just as much danger as I was, so you're entitled to half the glory."

"No, I'm not. I wouldn't have gone, of my own accord, after that car for a million dollars, and you know it."

"You needn't let anyone else know it, son," chuckled Joe.

"This will give you a boost with the management, and you can't have too much of that thing if you expect to push yourself ahead."

Joe got a signal to push the train of dirt cars ahead the length of one car so as to bring an empty one within reach of the steam shovel.

When the two boys ran No. 44 into the roundhouse early that evening they found out that the whole yard had heard the news about their rescue of the dynamite car.

An official letter was handed to Joe, with the stamp of the president's office on it.

He opened it and found a letter and a check for \$1,000, payable to his order, and signed by the treasurer of the road.

The letter stated that at the regular quarterly meeting of the directors of the company, held that day, the enclosed sum of money had been voted to him in recognition of his rescue of Miss Nellie Harford at the creek bridge three weeks since.

He was also recommended to the attention of the general manager as an employee deserving of early advancement in the company's service.

The letter was personally signed by the president.

Joe felt a couple of inches taller after reading it.

When he got home he found a letter from Emily Harford—the second he had received from her, but what she said in it was only of interest to the young engineer.

Joe's name, of course, had got into the Dalmatia and Green River newspapers in connection with his brilliant exploit at the bridge, and been copied by most of the other papers of the State.

It was therefore no surprise to him when he found that the Green River "Evening News" had a graphic account of his and Sam's exploit that day with the dynamite car.

Sam was tickled to death to see his name in print, and read the article over two or three times before he could turn to anything else.

Joe found that his mother and sister had read the paper, too.

If they hadn't the neighbors would have told them the news, for several had dropped in at the cottage to talk with Mrs. Manville about the matter.

"My son, that was a very daring thing for you and your friend to do," said his mother, while he was eating his supper.

"I won't say that it wasn't," replied Joe, helping himself to another slice of buttered toast.

"If that car had blown up at the critical moment where would you have been?"

"I suppose Sam and I would have been angels by this time," he chuckled.

"It is nothing to make fun of, Joe," she replied with a serious countenance. "It gave me quite a shock when I read the story in the evening paper."

"As long as I was not injured at all I don't see why you should have been so disturbed."

"I couldn't help thinking about what might have happened. How did the fire originate?"

"I couldn't tell you, mother, unless," he said suddenly, "those two tramps who were watching the excavating might have accidentally set the bushes afire when lighting their pipes. And now, mother, I've another surprise for you, and a pleasant one."

"What is it?" asked his mother, curiously.

"Read that letter," and Joe handed her the one from the president of the road containing the check for \$1,000.

Mrs. Manville was both surprised and gratified by the contents of the letter.

"The company has acted very liberally toward you," she said, looking at the check.

"Well, I guess I saved them quite a bill of damages, and a whole lot of legal trouble," he replied. "The money is very welcome, of course. It will come in handy for you to clear off the small balance of the mortgage you owe on this cottage. I'll endorse it so you can get the money to-morrow and put it in a savings bank until you have occasion to use it."

On the following day the first suspicion of foul play in connection with the dynamite car affair was brought to light by the discovery of a pocket knife bearing the name of Dave Benson, the discharged fireman, near the spot where the car had stood.

The foreman had heard someone remark that Benson had sworn to get square with the road because he was discharged.

He turned the knife in to the yard master and reported his suspicions.

The knife was identified by a number of employees as the property of Benson, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

Officers went to his different haunts in town, but he was not found.

On the Saturday of that week another engineer and fireman took Joe's and Sam's places on No. 44, and they were directed to report at the master mechanic's office at a certain hour.

Accordingly, they duly made their appearance before that official.

Mr. Galway complimented them upon their intrepid conduct in saving the dynamite car, and then told them that they were to go out that evening on Engine No. 66, which hauled the night freight over the mountains to Dalmatia.

Both boys were delighted with the change, as it was another step up the ladder for them.

"We seem to be the people just at present, Joe," said Sam, as they walked out of the yard together. "Things are not only coming your way pretty rapidly, but I am participating in your good luck."

"Aren't you glad?"

"Sure, I am. It would have broken me all up if I'd been left on No. 44 to fire for a new engineer, while you took a stranger out with you on No. 66."

"Mr. Galway probably figured that we make a good team."

"Then he didn't figure wrong. I know I can give a better account of myself in your company than with another man."

"It would be very satisfactory to me if we could stick together right along until you were appointed to an engine yourself."

"Those are my sentiments, too," replied Sam, heartily.

Calder went with Joe to his house.

Mrs. Manville and her daughter were much surprised to see them come in at that hour:

"Why, what's the matter, Joe? Aren't you working to-day?"

"We're off till nine o'clock to-night. The fact is we've both been promoted again."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes. Sam and I are going to take the night freight out over the range to Dalmatia. That means another little boost in our prospects and wages, and it means I will be away from home every night except once in two weeks, when we have a swing from Saturday morning till Sunday night."

While Mrs. Manville was pleased to learn of her son's advancement, she did not like the arrangement which would keep him away from home at nights.

"It can't be helped, mother. I'll be on the road nights."

Sam went to the roundhouse at half-past eight that evening to get No. 66 ready for her trip, and at nine Joe appeared.

Twenty minutes later they were pulling a long train of empty and loaded freight cars out of the yard en route for the mountains.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW JOE SAVES THE NIGHT MAIL.

Although the road looked different at night to what it did by day, Joe was familiar enough with the line to be able to keep track of where he was all the time.

Mountain View station was situated at the greatest altitude on the road.

There were two big summer hotels within a short distance of it that were already open for the season.

The night freight had to pull in at a siding at this point to allow the night mail from the East, pulled by G. R. & D. locomotives over the mountain and western divisions to Darien, and which left Green River at midnight, to pass.

This express did not stop at Mountain View, though the day ones did during the summer months.

Joe had to see that his train reached Mountain View siding by one o'clock, otherwise, if he blocked the mail the train master would require an explanation.

There were some tough grades on that side of the range, and Manville had a heavy train to pull over the summit, but Sam kept his shovel on the swing with unfailing regularity and the gauge showed a good head of steam on, so that Joe reached Mountain View siding some minutes ahead of the mail schedule.

"We're all right so far," said Joe, as he shut off steam and put on the brake.

When the train came to a stop he and Sam, with naphtha torches and oil cans, descended from the cab to oil up some of the parts of the locomotive.

By the time the mail was due they were ready to proceed. The express, for some reason, was late.

The station was dark and silent, except for the solitary window of the night operator's office, through which the rays of an oil lamp, backed by a reflector, shone clear and bright.

Joe looked back and saw two figures standing together on the platform.

He judged them to be the conductor and the operator.

The silence of that lonesome spot was alone broken by the hiss of escaping steam and the rhythmical pulsations of the big boiler.

Joe walked ahead a little distance to where the switchman was standing waiting for the mail to go by so he could connect the siding with the main line for the freight to pass out.

"The express is behind time to-night," remarked Joe.

"Yes," replied the switchman. "Are you a new fireman?" he added.

"No," answered Manville, with a smile, "I'm a new engineer."

"You don't say!" answered the man in some surprise. "You're rather young to run the night freight."

"Well, I'm getting older every day," laughed the boy.

"Of course. I suppose you have a pull with the general manager."

"Not to my knowledge."

"How long have you been on the road?"

"Seventeen months."

"How old are you?"

"Past eighteen."

"Began as a fireman, I suppose?"

"No—wiper."

"And you're now a regular engineer," said the man, evidently astonished at Joe's rapid advancement. "How long did you work in the yard?"

"As an engineer? Not a day. As a fireman, three months."

The man whistled:

"I ran over this division for a week on the day freight, and then worked three weeks on the new Spring Valley branch—my first experience as a regular engineer. This morning my fireman and myself were transferred to No. 66 on the night freight."

"You must have been born lucky," said the switchman.

"Possibly, but I've studied and worked hard for my present job."

A dense clump of bushes had grown up within a few yards of the switch.

Out of it at that moment three men crept toward Joe and the switchman.

The night was so dark that they looked like three shadows.

The young engineer and the switchman had their backs turned toward them.

They were in the act of springing toward the unconscious pair when Joe suddenly turned around.

He never knew just why he did so.

It must have been some magnetic influence that warned him of their presence.

"Hello!" cried the boy. "Why are——"

A blow in the face caused him to stagger back.

At the same moment the switchman was attacked and overpowered by two of the men.

The third who had struck Joe followed him up.

The boy recovered before the man closed on him.

He struck out at the fellow, and then dodged a heavy blow himself.

While the young engineer was defending himself the other two secured the switchman, gagging and binding him with great despatch as if every moment counted.

One seized the lantern, which had fallen to the ground.

"Now, then, Harris," he said, tensely, "attend to the switch—quick!"

Seeing that his other companion had not done up the young engineer, he dropped the lantern and ran to his assistance.

Joe saw him coming, and, realizing that the odds were too much for him to cope with, he made a dash back for the locomotive, shouting to Sam.

He reached the engine on the side further from the station just as Sam stuck his head out of the cab window and wanted to know what was the matter.

"Help—Sam! I'm attacked by two rascals!" cried the boy. "Get a wrench and we'll beat them off."

As Joe started to swing himself into the cab, one of the ruffians caught him by his legs and prevented him getting up.

The second came up at that moment, and between the two they succeeded in pulling the boy down on the ground.

Sam got the wrench and leaped to his aid.

In the darkness he could hardly tell at which figure to aim a blow for fear of striking his chum by mistake.

The two rascals had all they could do to hold Joe, and now that Sam was in the scrap with a weapon it would have gone hard with them had there been light enough for him to act quickly.

Finally he took a chance and whacked at one of the men, cutting a gash in his head with the end of the heavy wrench.

The fellow swore lustily and grabbed the wrench.

Sam threw himself on him and they rolled into the bushes, landing in a deep ditch.

The third ruffian, who had altered the switch, now appeared and helped the man who had Joe down secure him.

They gagged the boy with a handkerchief and tied his hands with another.

"Now, lie there, dern you!" cried the man by the name of Harris.

"Where's Benson?" asked the other man.

"Blamed if I know," replied Harris. "He and the fireman were havin' it hot and heavy a moment ago."

"They must be somewhere around here. I hear them. They're in that ditch. Let 'em fight it out. We've got no time to lose. The express will be along any moment and if we're goin' to do it up we want to be movin'. We'll uncouple three of the box cars. With the engine and tender that ought to be enough to do the trick. We'll run down the line to the crow's nest, set the brakes, and when the express comes around the curve she'll hit the obstruction and go scootin' down into the chasm. We'll make our way down afterward and pick up what we can find in the wreck."

"All right, Garvey, I'm with you," said Harris.

"I'll back the engine a bit while you uncouple at the third car. Do the rush act now."

Garvey sprang into the cab, shoved the reverse lever forward and then let steam enough into the cylinders to cause the drivers to make a partial turn.

A slight shock was communicated to the long line of freight cars.

Harris took advantage of the fact to uncouple the third car from the rest of the train.

"All right," he cried to Garvey, running up.

"Close the switch after I run out on the main track," said Garvey, pulling the reverse lever into place and then laying his hand on the throttle.

In a couple of moments the engine, tender and three box

cars detached themselves from the rest of the train and started ahead.

As soon as they cleared the switch, Harris locked it in place, and, springing up on the last car, climbed to the roof and, running forward, leaped into the tender.

Then Garvey put on steam and ran down the line, engine and cars disappearing in the darkness.

At that moment came the long drawn-out whistle of the express in the distance.

At the same time Sam emerged from the ditch, dragging Benson with him, whom he had stunned with a blow.

He fell over Joe, who lay in his path.

Bending down he recognized his chum in the dark, gagged and bound.

"Gracious! So they did you up, eh?"

Out came his knife, and Joe was free in a moment.

"Where are the oth—why, where's the engine?" quivered Sam, as Joe sprang to his feet.

Joe made no answer, but made a dash for the switchman's lantern, which stood beside the man's bound body.

He had heard what Garvey said about wrecking the express at a point a short distance ahead around the curve, called the crow's nest.

He had seen the two rascals start off with the locomotive and the three cars they were going to use as an obstruction at the point named.

And he had also heard the whistle of the oncoming express.

He knew there was no time for explanations.

That instant action only would save the night mail, which didn't stop at this station.

His only possible way to do it was to signal it with the switchman's lantern, one side of which carried a red glass.

Grabbing the lantern, he started up the track at full speed.

He met the conductor and several of the freight's crew coming toward him on the run, for the inexplicable departure of the engine and the three cars had been dimly noticed and gave rise to much astonishment and uneasiness.

"Thunder! Is this you, Manville? What the dickens is the——"

But the young engineer paid no attention to his words and eluded his grasp.

The conductor was amazed, the whole bunch stopping and looking after Joe.

Down the track flew the boy with the lantern swinging in his hand.

It was a long run to the end of the freight train, where the caboose stood with its two red lanterns shining like a pair of ensanguined glow worms in the gloom.

Then on still he went up the track, breathing thickly from the unusual exertion, but bent on covering as long a distance as he could toward the approaching express.

But now he saw its dazzling headlight coming towards him in the near distance.

It came on at gradually decreasing speed.

He was satisfied now that the mail was safe.

The locomotive sped past him, and then came the baggage, express and mail cars, followed by the coaches and sleepers.

The train drew up in front of the station and the conductor sprang down to get an explanation of the hold-up.

Nobody could give it to him till Joe came running up with his startling story of the designs of the two rascals who had run away with his own engine and three of the freight cars.

Then there was excitement to burn.

## CHAPTER XII.

### JOE IS REWARDED BY THE COMPANY.

Sam came up and corroborated a part of Joe's story.

"I've got one of the rascals," he said.

"Where is he?" asked the freight conductor.

"Lying stunned down near the head of the freight."

"Take a couple of the train hands and bring him up here."

Sam and the men departed on their errand.

"You say your locomotive, tender and three box cars are now down at the crow's nest stalled on the main track?" said the passenger conductor.

"I believe they are, for that's the spot the villains intended to throw the mail off into the chasm," replied the young engineer.

"The infernal scoundrels!" cried the conductor, aghast, as he realized by what a narrow margin a horrible catastrophe had been averted by Manville's prompt action.

"Take all the men with you, Manville," said the freight conductor. "Go down to the crow's nest and bring the cars back. It is hardly likely that you'll be able to catch the rascals, but keep a sharp eye out for them."

At that moment Sam and the two train hands came dragging the dazed Benson up to the spot where the crowd stood.

"Is this the fellow?" said the passenger conductor, flashing his lantern in the rascal's face.

"Yes," replied Sam. "Why, it's Benson!" he added, in astonishment.

"Benson!" said the conductor. "You know him, then?"

"Sure I do. He was formerly fireman of No. 23, which hauled the day freight. He was discharged for lushing, and I heard he swore to get back at the road."

"Indeed. The fellow must be a diabolical scoundrel. Get a rope and tie him. I'll take him on to Dalmatia in the baggage car and turn him over to the police."

Benson had recovered his faculties by this time.

Realizing his desperate predicament, he suddenly tore loose from the two men who held him, and, giving the passenger conductor a blow in the chest that staggered him, sprang off the platform and dashed away into the darkness.

He was immediately pursued by the train men, but managed to elude them.

When Joe and his men reached the crow's nest they found the locomotive and the three cars standing on the track with brakes set, but the villains themselves were not to be seen.

They were probably hiding in the vicinity, among the rocks or bushes, and a search would have been quite unprofitable.

The men piled up on the cars, the brakes were taken off, and Joe started back for the siding, where he soon arrived.

The main track being now clear, the express proceeded on its way, followed by the freight.

"Who would have thought we were going to have such an exciting time to-night?" remarked Sam, when they were under way once more.

"None of us ever dreamed of such a thing," replied Joe. "Benson must be a bloody-minded chap to engage in such a villainous scheme as wrecking the fast mail at such a place as the crow's nest. Why, if the express went over that point every car in it would have been reduced to matchwood, while the passengers and crew—well, they'd have been mangled beyond recognition. Hanging isn't any too good for such a man as Benson. I wonder who his companions were?"

"They must be as bad as he. They can't be much worse," replied Sam. "Where were you attacked in the first place?"

"At the switch. I was talking to the switchman when those villains came on us from behind. I managed to fight off the chap who attacked me, but when a second came up to help him I ran for the engine and called out to you."

"How did you come to learn that they intended to wreck the mail at the crow's nest?"

Joe told him what he had overheard after the men had bound and gagged him.

"If you hadn't come up and released me when you did I never would have been able to have signalled the mail," added Joe. "So, whatever credit is in it you're entitled to half."

"Not quite half, Joe. I only did what I couldn't help doing. Besides, I didn't know that any trap had been set for the express."

"That doesn't make any difference. You helped save the train without knowing it."

"Well, have it your own way. It would have been a terrible catastrophe if it had happened."

"Dreadful! I should say so. Every paper in the country would have had a new sensation under flaring headlines. It would have hit the G. R. & D. road mighty hard. A cool million would hardly have squared the account, not speaking of the grief it would have brought home to probably 200 families."

The run down the range was easy for Sam, as in many places steam was shut off altogether, and brakes were partially set to overcome the momentum of the long, heavy train.

They reached the yard in Dalmatia at about half-past ten.

After leaving No. 66 in the roundhouse, Joe and Sam repaired to the boarding house, had breakfast and then went to bed.

When Joe got back to Green River on the following morning with another freight, which had come through from Darien, he was summoned to the office of the general manager.

He told his story to that official, and gave Sam all the credit possible.

"You are a most remarkable young man, Manville," said the general manager. "The record you have made since you were promoted to fire No. 23 is an uncommonly brilliant one, and stamps you as an employee the company may well be proud of. There is no doubt in my mind but that the night mail would have been destroyed and probably every life lost, but for you. Your conduct in this matter will be presented before the directors, and I can assure you that the road will not overlook the obligation it is under to you."

"I don't think I did more than my duty, sir," replied the young engineer.

"That may be true. It was your duty to act promptly the moment you saw your way clear. Nevertheless, it is also the duty of this company to take special notice of special services on the part of its employees, especially when such services lead to important results."

Joe left the general manager's office feeling that he stood pretty high in that gentleman's confidence.

His mother and sister had learned something about the trouble at Mountain View, and the narrow escape of the night mail, from the next morning's paper.

Mrs. Manville and her daughter eagerly awaited the boy's return to learn the full particulars.

Those particulars he gave them while eating his late breakfast, after which he turned in for a sleep.

Joe was now famous throughout the yard.

The three remarkable exhibitions of pluck and rapid action he had given within such a short time astonished the railroad men and commanded their admiration and respect.

On the following Friday, on reaching Green River in the morning, he was requested to appear before the directors in the general offices of the company at a certain hour.

As this would prevent him from getting his regular rest, he was relieved from duty till Sunday night, another engineer being detailed to take the night freight to Dalmatia and make the return trip.

The general manager introduced Joe to the board and to the president of the road.

A resolution was then introduced conveying the thanks of the road to Joe Manville for saving the night mail on the night in question.

This was carried, and then the sum of \$10,000 was voted to him as a token of the company's appreciation.

A check was made out to his order, signed by the treasurer and presented to him.

Joe was both surprised and delighted at the liberality of the company, and he thanked the president and directors for their present.

"You have earned it fairly, Manville," said the president, "and you need not regard the money in any other light. In conclusion, let me say that the road will look out for your future, as young men of your ability are not picked up every day."

He then shook hands with the young engineer and bade him good day, and all the directors acknowledged his parting bow.

Joe asked the general manager for a pass to Dalmatia and back, stating that he had received an invitation from the little girl he had saved to visit them, and as he would have the whole of the next day to himself he thought it a good chance for him to make the call.

Of course he got the pass, and then he started for home to surprise his mother and sister with evidence of the company's appreciation of his services at Mountain View.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### JOE AND EMILY.

"Mother," said Joe, walking into the sitting-room where Mrs. Manville and her daughter were sewing, "we're rich."

"Rich!" exclaimed his mother. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. We are rich to the extent of \$10,000, over and above the other money you have in bank. Just feast your eyes on that," and he displayed the company's check before their wondering eyes.

When he told them how fine he had been treated by the president and directors his mother and sister felt prouder than ever of the bright, energetic boy.

Next morning he took the early passenger train for Dalmatia.

The conductor, in compliance with a written request from the general manager, which Joe handed him when he presented his pass, stopped the train at the creek bridge so that the boy could get off close to Farmer Harford's place.

Joe then walked up the road till he came to a gate which admitted him to a lane.

He passed up the lane until he came to another gate opening on a garden and driveway that fronted the house.

As he opened the gate he saw the flutter of a dress among the flowers.

As he advanced he saw that it was Emily Harford watering a rosebush.

On hearing his footsteps she turned around and recognized him at once.

"Why, Mr. Manville," she cried in evident pleasure, "is it possible you have at last honored us with a visit?"

"I am delighted to meet you again, Miss Emily," replied Joe, taking the dainty little hand she extended to him. "Having an unexpected day off I took advantage of it to pay you and your parents a visit, not knowing when I shall have another opportunity."

"I am so glad," she said, with a smile. "Come right in the house and I will introduce you to my mother. Then I will hunt up my father. They will be very glad to meet you, indeed."

Joe followed her into the sitting-room when Emily left him to summon her mother.

In a few minutes she brought Mrs. Harford back with her and introduced Joe to her.

She was a pleasant-faced little woman, and the boy was immediately attracted to her.

She said she was very glad to meet him, and hastened to thank him for having saved the life of her little daughter.

"I did the best I could, Mrs. Harford, and I am glad I was successful in preventing a tragedy," said Joe.

At that moment Nellie walked into the room and went shyly up to the young engineer.

Joe lifted her on his knee and asked her if she was glad to see him again.

She said she was very glad, indeed.

Mrs. Harford then said she had seen his name in the Dalmatia paper in connection with the night express affair.

Joe told her many particulars about the incident that had escaped the attention of the papers, and the little woman declared that he was quite a hero.

While they were conversing Emily brought her father in and introduced him to their visitor.

The farmer expressed the pleasure he felt at making the boy's acquaintance, and then proceeded to thank him once more for saving Nellie's life.

Emily, who had retired to her room to make herself a

little more presentable, re-entered the sitting-room, and soon after her mother went out to get dinner under way.

Mr. Harford also spoke about the Mountain View incident, and Joe gave him the additional particulars.

The farmer then took Joe over his farm and showed him all that was calculated to interest him, after which they returned to the house in time for dinner.

After the meal Joe, Emily and Nellie went for a walk down to the banks of the creek some little distance above the bridge.

"Isn't it lonesome and gloomy at night in the mountains?" Emily asked.

"It isn't very cheerful," laughed Joe; "but such things do not have any effect on an engineer, for his attention is constantly on the alert with the responsibilities of his position. I have to keep my eyes on the track ahead to see that the way is clear, and there are a lot of other things that I must look out for, so the lonesomeness of the route has no effect whatever on me. Still, I'd rather run in the daytime and sleep at night. At present that order of things is reversed with me."

"You'll get a day train by and by, I suppose."

"I expect to in time."

"If you lived in Dalmatia instead of Green River we could hope to see you more frequently."

"Would you like to see me often?" asked Joe, earnestly.

"Why, of course I should be glad to see you as often as you could manage to pay us a visit," Emily replied, with a blush.

"As I pass the bridge westward about half-past seven or eight every other morning you might come there once in awhile and give me the privilege of bowing to you."

"I'll be delighted to do so," answered Emily.

"Next week the opportunity will be yours on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. I will look out for you."

Joe remained at the Harford farm until half-past three, when, accompanied by Emily and her sister, he went to the bridge to be picked up by the afternoon passenger train, the conductor of which had promised to stop for him.

On Sunday night he resumed his post on No. 66, much to Sam's satisfaction, and next morning when he approached the creek bridge there were Emily and Nellie waiting to see him pass.

Joe tossed Emily a nosegay of wild flowers he had gathered near a siding up in the range during the night, and after waving her handkerchief at him she ran and picked it up.

When she got home she took it to her room and placed it in a small vase on her dressing-case.

Every time he struck the bridge on his westward trip after that Joe had flowers for her, and she never failed to be on hand to receive them and kiss her hand to him.

They also corresponded once a week now, and Emily kept all his letters.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### WHAT JOE DID FOR JASON HOBBS.

Joe and Sam continued on the night freight all summer, and the train always went through without a hitch.

Benson, Harris and Garvey, the rascals who had failed

to wreck the night mail, were not caught, and it was believed that they had left the State.

One morning when Joe was coming out of the yard on his way home he met Jason Hobbs, hanging around on the street outside.

"How do you do, Mr. Hobbs," said the boy, kindly.

"I look like a wreck, don't I?" replied the engineer in a hollow tone.

"You don't look as well as you used to. What have you been doing since you left the road?"

"You mean since the road left me. I ain't been doin' nothin'."

"Nothing at all?"

"There ain't nothin' for a man like me to do. I'm done for. When a man is discharged without a reputation no other road wants him, and I ain't good for nothin' else."

"Have you tried to get another job?"

"Yes. I went over to another road and offered to work in the yard, but they communicated with the G. R. & D. and that settled it."

"They wouldn't take you on?"

"No," answered Hobbs, with a discouraged look.

"That's too bad," replied Joe, sympathetically.

"I'm down to bed rock. My daughter, who was earnin' a few dollars in a store, is sick with a fever, and I'm afraid she's goin' to die. I can't pay for no doctor, nor medicine, nor nothin' for her to live on."

Tears began to roll down the old man's face, and Joe felt dead sorry for him.

"I've borrowed from some of the boys till they've soured on me," continued the engineer. "I thought I'd ask you for a dollar, if you could spare it, and if you can't I don't know what I'll do."

Joe put his hand in his pocket and pulled out sixty cents.

"Here's all the change I've got, Mr. Hobbs," he said, putting it in the man's hand.

"Heaven bless you, Joe. I didn't expect this of you," said the old engineer, gratefully. "I don't want to impose on you. I deserve all I'm gettin', and I wouldn't make a whimper if it wasn't for my girl. She's all I've got, and if she dies—" a sob choked his utterance. "Well, I won't care what becomes of me."

"She sha'n't die, Mr. Hobbs, if I can do anything to prevent it. You can depend on me. What's your address?"

Hobbs gave his address, which was two poor rooms in the cheapest part of Green River.

"And that was the boy I meant to do up when he came on my engine," muttered the engineer, hoarsely, looking after Joe. "I was goin' to spile his chances 'cause I didn't like him, and the crowd was down on him. Now he's runnin' an engine himself. He's the smartest lad on the road, and some day he'll be drivin' the express, while I—I'm only a wreck—a bum—and I'm down and out altogether. That's what drink brings a man to. It always fetches him in the end, and it's fetched me at last. Well, what's the use of talkin'? I've reached my finish, and that's all there is to it. Yet that boy called me Mister Hobbs, jest as if I was some account yet. And he didn't turn away from me like the others who have known me for years. And he shook hands with me, too. Bless him! He's a boy in a thousand."

Joe kept his word and sent his mother and sister to call on the engineer's daughter.

Hobbs was there and greeted them with profound respect. A doctor was called in for Mary Hobbs, and nourishing food and medicine provided for her.

Mary Manville also stayed with her all the afternoon and tended her.

"Mr. Hobbs," said Miss Manville, "Joe sent you this \$5. And he said if you promise to renounce liquor forever he'll try and get you back on the road."

"How can he? It would take a big pull to get such a man as me back."

"Well, Joe stands well with the company for saving the night express, and I have no doubt if he asks a favor the company will take it into consideration. He says he doesn't like to ask for your reinstatement if you're going to fall down again, as he calls it. You must promise to remain sober, and keep your word."

"Tell him I'll sign the pledge, and that I swear I'll keep it."

"Very well. I'll tell him."

Joe met Hobbs by appointment when he returned to Green River two days later and he got the engineer's name to a written pledge that he would abstain entirely from liquor.

Then he called on the general manager of the road and asked, as a special favor to himself, that Hobbs be taken on again in any engineering capacity.

He backed his request up with the old man's pledge.

The general manager promised to consider the matter.

In a few days Joe was called into the office of the train master.

"I understand, Manville," said that official, whose name was Scott, "that you have interested yourself in having Jason Hobbs reinstated on the road. Why?"

Joe respectfully detailed his reasons, going into the old man's unfortunate situation and that of his daughter.

"Humph!" replied Mr. Scott, curtly. "Sympathy is all very well in its way, but it doesn't go on a railroad. Hobbs was blind drunk on the day he was discharged, and I don't believe you can be ignorant of that fact, young man, since you were in the cab with him. You tried to make it out that he had been attacked with a fit, if I remember rightly. Suppose that was the truth, it would have been sufficient to have caused his discharge anyway, for a man who has had a fit once is liable to have another at any time, and that won't do at all, as you ought to know. Now, suppose you hadn't risen to the occasion that day and stopped the freight after it had got on the down-grade, at a speed it had no business to be running on, what would have happened to the second passenger section? What would the road have been up against in point of damages for injuries and probable loss of life to passengers, not to speak of a considerable loss to the company's property? Answer that, young man. You can't," went on the train master, seeing that Joe remained silent. "Very good. Now, the man was justly discharged. What kind of discipline do you suppose can be maintained on this road if we take a man back under such circumstances?"

"Mr. Scott, Jason Hobbs is a thoroughly capable engineer when he's sober," said Joe. "He had a long record of usefulness on this road till he fell down. He has given me his word of honor in writing to stop drinking forever."

"Huh!" sneered the train master, "what does his honor

amount to? Besides, that isn't the question. The question is that of taking him back. I object to it. I discharged him, and I don't like my orders questioned or overridden. I have been directed by the general manager to reinstate Hobbs. Well, I called on Mr. Burnside and told him what I have just told you, that Hobbs could not be re-employed except at a cost to the discipline of the road. I requested to know who had interested himself in this matter, and Mr. Burnside said the request had come from you, and that the company felt bound to consider any favor you asked for. Very good. I admit you have a certain claim on the company's attention, but I think you are asking a trifle too much in this case. Now, I shall not take Jason Hobbs back—that is, not on my own responsibility. I shall simply refer him to the consideration of Mr. Galway, stating that it is the wish of Mr. Burnside that he be put to work again. If the master mechanic chooses to give him an engine he can do so. That's all, Manville."

Joe then made so bold as to call on Mr. Galway and state that he had asked for Jason Hobbs' reinstatement, giving his reasons in full, as he had done before the train master.

Although Mr. Galway played no favorites, he was favorably disposed toward Joe on account of his remarkable record.

He saw that the young engineer was greatly interested in Hobbs, so he said:

"If I receive instructions to put Hobbs to work I will do so."

"Thank you, Mr. Galway."

And so the matter was settled.

Three days later Hobbs went to work on a switch engine, much to the surprise of his old associates.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE HOLD-UP.

A month passed and one morning when Joe and Sam returned from their regular trip with the night freight from Dalmatia they were summoned to the master mechanic's office.

"Manville," said Mr. Galway, in his sharp, incisive tones when he was talking business. "We open the Spring Valley Branch to Montrose to-morrow. I have decided to put you on one of the new engines and give you a day run. You will take out the first passenger, No. 75, at eight. Your engine will be No. 17."

"Thank you, sir," replied Joe, overjoyed at his promotion.

"Calder, I have had a good report of you since you've been firing for Manville. I have concluded not to separate you for the present. You will therefore report at the roundhouse in the morning in time to get No. 17 ready. That is all, young men. You may go."

The master mechanic took up the butt of his cigar which he laid on the corner of his desk while talking, swung around in his pivot-chair, and gave his attention to some papers before him.

The boys bowed and walked out of the office.

"Gee whiz! If that isn't great I'm a boiled lobster," cried Sam, cutting a caper in his delight. "Just think of it! No more night runs on that old freight, breaking

your back to keep steam up on a tough grade, but a day run to Montrose and back on a regular passenger. Why don't you shout, you old hoss!" and Sam fetched Joe a whack on the back that you could have heard half a block off.

"Yes, it's fine," replied Joe, quietly.

Although he did not give any outward exhibition of his satisfaction he was, for all that, tingling with pleasure.

Another round up the ladder had been achieved.

Joe was a mighty proud boy when he stood at the throttle of engine No. 17, attached to passenger local No. 75, drawn up in the depot at Green River waiting for the conductor's signal to pull out for Montrose.

The president's private car was attached, and that official, several directors, the division superintendent, and other officials of the road, were going to make the first trip from Green River that morning.

There was an article in the morning papers about the opening of the new branch, and the fact was published that some of the company's officials would make the trip.

Another thing that pleased Joe was that he had just heard that Jason Hobbs had been put back on the day freight in place of Abe Morris, who had been put on one of the new locomotives on the Spring Valley Branch.

Morris was to make the first trip from Montrose that morning on passenger No. 67.

He and Joe would pass each other somewhere on the line.

Joe got the signal at last.

"Ring, Sam," he said, as he let off the brake and pulled a little on the throttle.

Sam pulled on the bell-rope, and with a "puff—puff—puff—puff," the train began to glide away from the depot.

They were soon slipping along at a slow rate of speed towards the outskirts of the town, the bell ringing "ding-dong, ding-dong."

As soon as they were clear of Green River Joe increased speed until they were flying at a thirty-mile clip.

The first stop was at Parkville and the next the junction where the train left the main line and went on the Branch.

Joe reached the latter on time to the minute.

One passenger got off.

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor.

There was nobody waiting to go on down the Branch from there so the conductor signalled to go ahead and jumped on the forward car.

They stopped successively at Clinton, Fairdale and Prescott, and then there was a fifteen-mile run without a stop, a part of which carried them through the foothills where there was a deep cut.

Joe ran her up to thirty-five miles an hour, after leaving Prescott.

Opening out a straight track to the cut, Joe ran the speed up to forty miles.

"We're going some," said Sam. "No. 17 is a fine engine."

"She's a beauty," replied Joe. "Behaves like a regular lady."

"That's what she does. The track is as fine as silk."

Suddenly Joe pushed the reverse lever clear forward and whistled down brakes, at the same time applying the air-brakes.

"Hello!" cried Sam, straightening up, shovel in hand, "what's wrong?"

"Something on the track ahead," replied Joe. "I can't make out what it is, but it looks like an obstruction."

Sam stuck his head out of his window and looked ahead.

"By Jupiter, you're right! There is something. It's stretched clear across both rails. What the deuce can it be?"

They were rapidly drawing near it.

Whatever it was it looked curious.

"Dern it all!" cried Sam, at length. "It looks just like a man stretched out asleep."

"It can't be," replied Joe, letting sand on the rails. "No man is going to pick such an uncomfortable, not to say dangerous, bed to snooze on."

"Drunken men will do most any old thing. They don't know any better."

"It does look like a man," said Joe, after a moment or two. "Gee! I hope not, for we may strike the obstruction, and I don't want to kill anyone."

"It would be tough luck on your first passenger trip."

The locomotive was now slowing down rapidly, but it was still a question whether the pilot wouldn't strike whatever was on the track.

Sam climbed out on the foot-board and ran forward.

After one good look he rushed back to the cab.

"It is a man, for a fact," he said, excitedly. "And what's more, it looks like a pair of them."

"A pair of men!" gasped Joe, his hair beginning to rise, as the possibility of a tragedy confronted him. "Great Scott! I'm afraid we'll strike."

In a couple of moments more all doubt as to the fact that there were two men on the track vanished.

Joe let off shriek after shriek of the whistle, but there wasn't a move on the part of the human obstructions.

"They must be lifeless," he said to himself. "Those whistles are loud enough to wake the dead."

"They're tied to the track!" sung out Sam, in a fever of excitement.

"Tied to the track!" fluttered Joe. "My heavens! What is the meaning of it?"

As Joe shut off steam and the drivers gave their last expiring turn, the locomotive coming to a dead stop, the two forms seemed to Joe's terrified eyes to disappear under the pilot.

Sam sprang to the ground and ran up to the men.

Joe whistled for the conductor and jumped from the cab on the opposite side.

The conductor was in the baggage-car, and he was at hand in a moment.

Joe was looking at the human obstructions in bewildered amaze.

"What does this mean?" gasped the conductor, gazing down at the two figures, bound hand and foot to the rails.

"Great Scott! It's a hold-up!" cried Joe, as four ruffians with rifles appeared from the shelter of the brushwood.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### JOE FOILS THE TRAIN ROBBERS.

There wasn't any doubt but it was a hold-up, and a mighty daring one at that.

This explained the presence of the two forms tied to the rails.

They looked like young farm hands, in their shirts, trowsers, and boots, without head covering, and the terrified look that rested on their features, together with their rolling eyes, showed that they were fully conscious.

In spite of the presence of the four villainous-looking rascals, one of whom seemed to wear a familiar look, Joe pulled out his knife and started to cut one of the obstructions loose.

"Stop!" cried the foremost ruffian, in a threatening tone, at the same moment covering the young engineer with his gun. "Throw up your hands, the three of you, or I'll perforate you."

Joe threw his up very reluctantly, while Sam and the conductor followed suit.

The other men dashed down the line toward the president's private car, which was coupled on at the end of the train.

Joe's active brain was busy at work trying to figure out some plan to foil the purposes of the scoundrels.

It struck him that the fellow who held them under his gun was one of the men who had been implicated in the Mountain View affair a few months back.

He wasn't sure, however, as he had not been able to get a square look at either of the rascals that night, owing to the darkness.

"Is your name Garvey?" he asked at a venture.

The fellow started and looked at him intently.

"What is that to you?" he snarled.

"Not much," replied Joe, "except that you'll be pinched in about a minute."

"Eh!" ejaculated the rascal, a trifle startled.

"Quick!" shouted Joe, as if to someone behind the ruffian. "Grab him!"

The rascal, taken off his guard, lowered his gun and gave a half-spring around ready to defend himself.

The moment he did so Joe made a dash for the locomotive.

The man saw he had been fooled and turned in time to detect the boy's move.

He raised his rifle and fired at Joe.

The ball tore a hole through the young engineer's jumper and shirt, grazing his skin, but inflicted no further injury.

Joe sprang into the cab, let off the brakes all through the train, and the ones on the engine, and pulled on the throttle.

The reverse lever still stood forward and he did not have to touch it.

Crack!

The rascal fired at Joe, and the ball narrowly missed the young engineer, chipping off a splinter from the woodwork of the cab window.

As the locomotive began backing away from the obstruction, the ruffian dashed forward and by the skin of his teeth sprang upon the pilot.

He began moving along the footboard toward the cab with blood in his eye as Joe put on more steam and the train gathered speed.

"Shut off or I'll kill you!" the scoundrel shouted, raising his gun.

"Never!" answered the boy.

The villain covered him and fired quick.

Joe dodged, but nevertheless the ball raised a furrow at the roots of his hair just above his forehead, half stunning him.

He fell forward, his hand on the lever, the blood pouring down his face.

Satisfied that he had killed the young engineer the rascal walked up to the window on Sam's side and looked in at Joe.

The boy lay inert, with the blood dropping on his overalls.

"He's done for. Serves him right for trying to spoil our game," the fellow muttered, dropping his rifle in the cab and pushing himself through the window.

He tore Joe away from the throttle and dropped him in the tender.

Then he shut off steam, and looked at the levers, not knowing which was the one that opened the brakes.

While he was figuring out the problem, Joe recovered his wits, brushed the blood from his eyes and looked around him.

He saw the villain putting his hand on one of the levers, which, by chance, happened to be the one he wanted.

He staggered to his feet, seized a heavy lump of coal, and creeping forward, dashed it at the fellow's head.

The rascal staggered and fell over, stunned.

Before he could recover Joe whisked a small towel out of his locker and bound the man's hands behind his back.

While doing this he felt the butt of a revolver in his hip pocket, and he took possession of it.

A sheath knife with an ugly-looking blade was in his jacket pocket, and Joe took that away also.

"I guess I've drawn all his teeth," muttered the young engineer. "He nearly did for me, but I've turned the tables on him."

He dragged the fellow into the tender and left him.

Then, seeing that steam had been shut off, he pulled the throttle out again and soon had the train racing back toward Prescott at a high rate of speed.

He knew that the other three scoundrels were on the train and he intended to try and get them captured, for he did not believe they would dare leap off while he was running at thirty-five miles an hour.

When the ruffians boarded the president's car they blocked each door while the third man started to rob the railroad officials.

The starting of the train rather disconcerted them, and they began to suspect that something was wrong, but as the speed was comparatively slow at first they figured that their companion was backing the cars away from the spot where the hold-up had taken place for some reason of his own, so they kept on with the robbery.

But presently the train increased its speed to an alarming extent for them, and, having gone through the railroad men, they came out on the platform of the private car and held a hurried consultation.

It was decided that one of them must get on the roof of the car, run forward and see what was the matter.

He took his rifle with him in case he would need it.

Joe, who was keeping a lookout backward, half expecting trouble from the villains in some shape, saw him as he came into view on top of the baggage car.

The boy seized the rifle belonging to his prisoner and fired at the fellow.

The ball hit the arm that carried the gun, and the weapon fell on the roof of the car and bounced off.

The rascal, with a howl of pain, retreated out of sight.

He carried the unwelcome news to his companions that the engineer had regained the cab and was running the train back, no doubt, to Prescott.

They could not account for the engineer having a gun himself, and they came to the conclusion that if they expected to avoid capture they must take the desperate chances of leaping from the moving train.

This they did, one after the other, landing in the bushes and dirt, and rolling over half stunned.

It happened that they jumped off on the side covered by Joe's backward glance, and he instantly shut off steam and put on the air-brakes.

As soon as the cars came to a stop he started ahead to overtake them.

Two of them managed to crawl into the bushes, but the fellow who had the booty in his possession was not so fortunate.

Joe reached him in time to prevent him from getting away.

Bringing the engine to a stop near the man, the boy covered him with the rifle and ordered him to surrender.

He gave in sullenly enough, and then the young engineer called on the baggage master to jump down and secure him.

Then Joe, in company with the baggage man, the mail clerk and two brakemen went in search of the other two.

After some trouble they were located.

But they put up a fight with their revolvers, wounding the mail clerk at the first fire.

Joe then opened fire on them, and they threw up the sponge.

Thus the whole four were captured and Joe went back to the president's car to explain matters to the head of the company and the other officials.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CONCLUSION.

The railway officials were all crowded on the platform of their car, while a kind of panic pervaded the two passenger coaches.

The passengers were only beginning to understand just what had happened.

Joe's bloody face showed that he must have had a strenuous experience, and the president and general manager hardly knew him.

He told the story of the hold-up in a few words, and also how he had turned the tables on the four rascals.

The president and his business associates declared almost in one breath that he had behaved like a hero.

"Do you feel able to run the train on to Montrose, Manville?" asked the general manager. "If not, you can back her down to Prescott."

The boy declared that he could take the train on to the city, and he left the car to go forward to the cab.

The general manager accompanied him as far as the baggage car, into which the three villains had been taken, as

he wanted to recover his own valuables, as well as the property belonging to the other officials.

Joe called on the baggage master to remove the prisoner he had in the tender, which was done.

The young engineer was about to start on when a whistle down the line heralded the approach of Abe Morris' train.

Passenger train No. 67 slowed down when it drew near the stalled train, and the first thing Joe saw was Sam springing from Morris' cab.

He and the conductor had been taken up and brought on by Morris.

"My gracious, Joe!" cried Sam. "One of that rascal's bullets reached you, didn't it!"

"It did, and nearly finished me," replied his chum, starting up, after waving his hand to Morris.

"You look like it. You've got a nasty wound on your head. How do you feel?"

"Rather weak and dizzy, now that the excitement is over."

"How about the villains? Did they get off?"

"They did not. They're prisoners in the baggage car."

"Good," said Sam, beginning to shovel in fuel, for the steam was quite low by this time. "How were they captured?"

"I'll tell you by and by when I feel better. I wish you'd run the engine till I wash my wound and get the blood off my face."

"All right," said Sam, taking his place at the throttle.

Joe felt much better after bathing his wound and tying it up with his handkerchief, but for all that he let Sam run the train most of the way to Montrose.

The report of the hold-up caused considerable excitement around the depot.

The prisoners, one of whom was identified as Benson, were marched to the city prison and locked up.

After their examination before a magistrate they were held for trial.

In due time they were tried, convicted and sent to the State prison for a long term.

A second indictment was found against Benson for the night mail affair.

He squealed on his companions, and two of them, Harris and Garvey, were also indicted on the second charge.

It was Garvey who boarded the locomotive and shot Joe, and it was Harris that the young engineer wounded on the top of the baggage-car.

Once more Joe got into the newspapers, and there was enough said in print about his pluck and energy to turn the head of most young men of his age, but it had no such effect on him.

It was generally acknowledged that he had accumulated more fame in a shorter space of time than falls to the lot of most men in this busy world.

The president and other officials who had been in the car that morning not only praised him to the skies, but they contributed a sum of money to purchase him a valuable gold watch, chain and charm.

The watch was suitably inscribed and presented to Joe by the president himself.

At the next meeting of the directors his conduct was duly extolled and he was declared to be one of the road's most valuable employees.

A few days after the hold-up Joe got a letter from Emily in which the young lady showed deep concern over the wound he had received from Garvey's bullet.

The young engineer hastened to assure her that it was a mere scratch, but just the same he bore the scar there as long as he lived.

Joe continued to run the passenger train over the Spring Valley Branch all through the winter and up to the beginning of the following summer, when the death of one of the best engineers of the road led to his advancement to the day express from Green River clear through to Darien.

Sam went with him, at his special request.

He was now nineteen, a fine, stalwart, young fellow, who was regarded by his comrades and the officials alike as the pride of the road.

He did not lose any of his popularity because he would not visit saloons and drink with the boys when off duty.

It was noticed that he did not even smoke, either a cigar or a pipe.

Neither did Sam.

Jason Hobbs kept his pledge to the letter, for he knew that Joe Manville had made himself responsible for his sobriety and good conduct, and he withstood temptation, which assailed him strongly at first, out of pure regard for the boy who had stood his friend in his hour of need.

Mary Hobbs recovered, of course, from her sickness, and was able to go to work again, and about the time Joe went on the express she was married to an enterprising young Green River mechanic in the railroad shops.

A short time before Joe was promoted to the express he became engaged to Emily Harford, with her parents' full consent.

When he went on the flyer he arranged a signal with his sweetheart which he always let off on the whistle as his train approached the bridge in either direction, thus letting her know that, whether she was waiting at the creek or not for him to go by, he was thinking of her.

They were married when Joe became twenty-one. But he was destined for the greatest fame and distinction a railroad man can aspire to. His great ability and intelligence were recognized later on by the management, and he was given a place in the office. Here his upward progress was rapid. By economy he saved enough money to buy stock in the road. Then he was promoted from one position to another, and eventually he became the president of the road, and that position of honor he holds at the present writing, true to his duty, true to his trust, and honored and respected by the whole community.

## THE END.

Read "FROM MESSENGER TO MILLIONAIRE; OR, A BOY'S LUCK IN WALL STREET," which will be the next number (108) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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## GOOD STORIES.

Thirty-five years ago the consumption of Portland cement was 3,000 barrels a year, and now it has reached 4,000,000. It is said that last year's output would be sufficient to construct a sidewalk 15 feet wide encircling the globe.

Seven boys entered their miniature airships for the annual kite flying contest, open to children of the public and parochial schools, which took place the other afternoon in Genesee Valley Park, N. Y. Interest was lent to the contest by an odd incident, showing that the birds of the air may be fooled by the cleverness of man. Aling Brown had a kite made in imitation of an American eagle, and when it spread its wings to the breeze and rode away into the air it looked like a real "king of the air." Indeed, so perfect was the imitation that as the beautiful kite soared over one of the trees in the park in rising, two large kingfishers saw the strange fowl and, uttering their shrill cry of battle, left the tree and followed the kite high into the air. They wheeled and circled around their new enemy, but such was their awe of the majestic bird they did not venture to push hostilities to the actual point of contact. This eagle kite took the first prize.

Most Lancashire, Eng., cyclists are familiar with Winwick, a village on the way between Leigh and Warrington, surrounded by good roads, and no doubt many of these wheelers have been struck with the curious effigy of a pig carved in the tower of Winwick church. It is said that when the church was being built a pig moved the foundation stone three times, and at last allowed the stone to remain on the spot where the church now stands. An effigy was therefore placed in the church tower. The word "Winwick" uttered with a nasal twang resembles the grunt of a pig, and this is also said to give the village its name.

General Smirnoff writes of General Stoessel's conduct during the siege of Port Arthur, according to the Chicago News: "The timidity of Stoessel was such that he never appeared in the fighting lines, but he abused the population as 'pol-troons' and 'rascals.' When, in September, several shells fell near our lodgings, Stoessel moved to the house of General Volkoff, in another part of the town. His flowers and part of his household things had been moved when a shell struck Volkoff's house. The things were taken back to the old place. Toward the end of November the enemy began shelling us from eleven-inch mortars, and Stoessel again removed, this time to the vicinity of the barracks of the Tenth Regiment, which was out of range. There he lived in perfect safety until the enemy was able to shell this quarter also. Thereupon he hastened to surrender. Such pusillanimity made him the constant laughing stock not only of the officers but of the rank and file and civilians as well, but whenever he caught any one ridiculing him he took the cruellest vengeance."

Evidently the people who have taken to raising albatross on farms are working on the principle that if it is bad luck to kill one of these sea birds it must be exceedingly good luck to propagate them. One of the farms where a business is made of hatching and rearing young albatross has already reached a place of importance in one of the European countries. Hundreds of birds are raised on this farm, and many men and women are employed in taking care of them. The albatross lays a single white egg, and it prefers to build its nest on the ground. The ordinary bird of this name does not need to have salt put on its tail to fall an easy prey for it will bite at a hook and line baited with a piece of pork. One might really go albatross fishing instead of hunting in the region of an albatross farm. Some of these birds grow very large, the spread of their wings measuring twelve feet. As a rule albatross are perfectly white, with slight dark markings, and some are all dark, like soot-covered birds.

Henry Clay was an aspirant for the Presidency of the United States for twenty-four years, but never reached the goal. He received 37 electoral votes in 1824, 49 in 1832 and 105 in 1844. He was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives six times, and was twice United States Senator, besides holding other high offices.

After an accident to a flywheel in a large European electric station the superintendent designed and had constructed a flywheel of wood which has a diameter of 35 feet and a rim width of 10 feet. The thickness of the rim is about 12 inches and it is made up of forty-four thicknesses of beech planks with staggered joints. The boards were glued together and then bolted. The inside consists of a double wheel, the twenty-four spokes of which are fastened to two hubs. Spokes and hubs are of cast iron. The wheel is operated at seventy-six revolutions a minute, which corresponds to a peripheral speed at the rim of 139 feet a second.

## JOKES AND JESTS.

Miss Flyppe (in grand stand)—Those fellows are excellent musicians, aren't they?

Her Escort—Not to my knowledge. What makes you think so?

Miss Flyppe—They don't seem to know how to play baseball.

The governing board of an educational institution for colored people in Washington were not a little mystified as well as amused recently when in response to an advertisement inserted by them in the local papers they received the following communication:

"Gentlemen—I noticed your advertisement yesterday for a pianist and music teacher, either white or colored. Having been both for several years I wish to offer my services."

An army officer in charge of a native district in South Africa presented the Kaffir boy who acted as his particular servant with a pair of strong, heavily nailed ammunition boots.

The boy was delighted with the gift, and at once sat down and put the boots on. They were the first pair he ever had, and for several days afterward he strutted proudly about the camp in them. But a few days later he appeared as usual in bare feet, with the boots tied round his neck.

"Hullo!" said his master, "why don't you wear your boots? Are they too small for you?"

"Oh, no, sah," replied the Kaffir, "they plenty big. Berry nice boots, sah, but no good for walking or running. Make um fellah too much slow, sah. Keep boots now for wear in bed."

Edyth—You ought to have heard Mr. Huggins's ringing speech last night.

May—Why, I wasn't aware that he could make a speech.

Edyth—Well, I can't repeat the speech, but I can show you the ring.

# WATKINS' WEIRD

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

Albert Watkins, solicitor and petty lawyer, had all his life practiced usury, extortion, and frugality. This had won for him the epithets of skinflint and miser.

Little he recked, though, what the world thought of him.

Public opinion was lightly held by Albert Watkins, and consequently his name in the community became synonymous with "snig," "penurious" and "grasping."

Indeed, there were plenty who did not wish the old pettifogger well. Among a certain ignorant class of tenants, curses, and even dark threats of possible vengeance were uttered.

Anarchy was a profession not yet known in the thriving little town of Hubbell, Pennsylvania, else Albert Watkins might have fallen under the socialists' ban.

The tale to be repeated in these pages the author does not attempt to vouch for. It may be true, it may not; but to give it for what it is worth, and just as it was rendered to him, will be his purpose.

There are plenty of believers in things supernatural. There are plenty of bold skeptics. The former will, affirm the skeptics, be found only among the ignorant and uneducated classes.

However this may be, it is a well-known fact that statistics will show that men of advancement, of learning, and of cool nerve, will repeat often cases of the supernatural, which, while they will not credit them to be such, are unable to give lucid explanation.

But we will not waste time in theorizing or palpable logic. Let us rather proceed to the facts concerning the strange and weird experience of Mr. Watkins.

For a year past there had reigned a business panic in the country. Bankers, brokers, tradesmen, and, in fact, all classes, were deeply affected by it. But there were some exceptions. Those men who, like Watkins, had plenty of ready money, and did not do business on borrowed capital, were in the best of spirits. Indeed, Watkins was right in his element.

From morning until night he was engaged in making and collecting loans, and extorting fabulous rates of interest, in default of which foreclosure would follow, and a sacrifice sale insuring mighty profits to the usurer.

One day there came to the Hall, the rich residence of the usurer, a raggedly clad girl, not more than a dozen years old.

Her name was Alice Lee, and she was the fourth of six children of Herbert and Mabel Lee, who lived in the lower part of the town.

Herbert Lee, a year previous, had been a prosperous manufacturer of yarns, and owned the mill which was one of the principal industries of Hubbell.

The Lee mansion was a fine estate. The family were loved and respected. But the financial panic struck Lee at a weak moment, and he was embarrassed.

In his extremity he went to Watkins for money. A tremendous rate of interest was allowed—six per cent. a month. However, Lee hoped to pay off the loan in a few months.

But in this extremity a large firm whose notes had been discounted by Lee went under. This again crippled the manufacturer. He went to Watkins for an extension. The usurer saw his opportunity to grasp the all of his neighbor.

"Only give me an extension," pleaded Herbert Lee. "I shall be on my feet in three months."

But Watkins turned coldly away. The next day the foreclosure fell. Forced sale ruined the whilom prosperous manufacturer, and he went to the wall without fifty dollars left.

Everything was swept away clean. Turned out of doors, the family was forced into a wretched tenement. Then overwork and trouble brought the unfortunate manufacturer down upon a sick bed.

For months he hovered this side of the grave. He was a shattered wreck. Never again would he arise. Who was responsible for this?

People viewed the case aghast. Watkins was openly blamed. "I must protect myself," he said coldly.

"You could have done that, and still have allowed Lee to continue," said a leading business man.

"Lee's fortunes are nothing to me," sneered the old skinflint. "He had as good a chance in life as I did. I only took my own."

Upon this day that Alice Lee presented herself at the Watkins mansion, Herbert Lee had seen the end coming. With the desperation of a dying man he made one last effort to leave his little family well provided for.

Alice Lee carried a letter. It was superscribed in a trembling hand to Albert Watkins.

The hall boy, gay in his uniform and brass buttons, opened the door. He was a lad of tender heart, and regarded the shivering girl pityingly.

"Father has sent this letter to Mr. Watkins," she said, in a barely audible voice.

The boy smiled pleasantly.

"All right, sis," he said, cheerily. "I'll take it to him, as sure as my name is Tom Taylor. Wait here."

Watkins was in his library. He languidly tore away the seal and read the message from the dying man:

ALBERT WATKINS:

DEAR SIR: It gives me more humiliation than you can know to present to you my case once more. I am dying. Tomorrow's sun will see me a corpse, and my tender family are without even a morning meal. Now you know I have a moral if not a legal right to call upon you to in some modest way provide for them. You have profited richly by my losses. Every dollar of property I ever had you have unjustly and selfishly cleaned me out of. Now it is only fair that you should return a modest sum to my dear ones. I would not ask it for myself. You must do this, or by heaven and its angels, I will come back from the dead to haunt you! I will be your weird to the end of your life! Heed the warning. My dear wife and tender ones must not starve. Come and see me this hour, or it will be too late.

Yours prayerfully,

HERBERT LEE.

For a moment Watkins' face was as dark as a thundercloud; then he crushed the letter and flung it upon the floor. He arose and touched a bell. Tom Taylor, the hall boy, appeared.

"My boy," he said, "go downstairs and tell that ragamuffin girl to go back to her father and tell him that he has insulted me. I will never help him now, though I *might* have done so otherwise."

Tom went downstairs, but he had not the heart to tell the child word for word. He abridged it carefully, though the effect was there.

And Herbert Lee, tossing upon his bed of pain, heard the answer of the man who had ruined him.

Wife and weeping children were gathered at the bedside. The dying man pressed the faithful wife's hand and said:

"Fear not. I shall be always near you."

Then his spirit fled. That morning, at about the same hour, Albert Watkins was wakeful. He felt a strange and horrible sensation. Something seemed hovering over his bed—some weird, awful shape.

Something clutched his wind-pipe. He was choking, dying; then with a mighty effort he sprang out of bed, sending forth cries of terror which brought the household, servants and all, to his side.

"It was a nightmare," he said. "I am subject to them."

Something told him the truth before he read in the morning paper of Herbert Lee's death. He was cold and shivering as he remembered that it was about the hour of his fearful experience.

He would not attach significance to the coincidence. His resolute soul held this off. Still, there was a haunting fear that the dead man's threat might be enacted. That he might come back to haunt him.

There was a noticeable change in the appearance of Albert Watkins. People noticed it. Many wondered at it.

Age seemed coming rapidly upon him. In various ways he was no longer the same. His manner was that of a criminal in fear of the law—a hunted man.

Mrs. Lee was struggling hard against the tide of poverty. With her helpless ones to provide for, it was no easy matter to keep from the door the gaunt wolf of want.

Nearby lived the Taylors, consisting of Tom, the hallboy at Watkins' house, his mother and an invalid sister.

Tom was well acquainted with the facts concerning Mr. Lee's failure and death. He knew the grasping nature of Watkins as nobody else did.

"I tell you, Mrs. Lee," Tom said one day, "Mr. Watkins has been acting very strangely of late. There seems to be a heavy weight upon his mind. Indeed, I am not sure but that he is going to lose his wits."

"That is strange," she said.

"I think so," continued Tom. "Do you know, he acts very much like a haunted man. He is constantly giving little starts, and once he came rushing through a dark corridor with awful screams of terror, and into the library where I was. At sight of me he stopped screaming, but he was a sight to behold. His face was as white as chalk, and he was all perspiration. I jumped up and asked him if he was sick. 'Go out into the corridor, Tom,' he said, 'and see if you can see anybody there.' I did, but the place was deserted. I came back and said so. He called for some wine, and said something about being haunted. Really, it is very strange."

Mrs. Lee drew a sharp, quick breath. She had heard her husband say that he would return and haunt Watkins, but had not attached any belief to the declaration.

"It is probably some mania which Mr. Watkins has acquired, Tom," she said, finally. "Of course, it is not possible for the dead to come back."

It was not a week later when another strange incident occurred.

The watchman on the beat near the Watkins mansion, at midnight heard fearful cries, and rushing around a corner saw a man groveling in the gutter in a darkened part of the street. At first he believed it was some unfortunate victim of delirium tremens. He proceeded to help him upon his feet, and to his amazement, recognized the millionaire usurer, Watkins.

"What is the matter, Mr. Watkins?" he cried, in surprise. "Have you been assaulted?"

"Y-yes! Some strange thing leaped upon me from the dark and bore me down. It must have been the devil!"

The officer signaled for some of his associates, and the vicinity was assiduously searched, but not even the least trace of the assailant could be found.

The rumor began to gain circulation that Watkins was beginning to atone for some of his harsh measures. Some of the more ignorant claimed that Old Nick, whom he had served so well, was after him, and would yet carry him away to the infernal regions.

Then came the most thrilling incident to cap all. The end was near.

One night Watkins remained up to a late hour writing in the library. Tom Taylor was dozing in the depths of an arm-chair by the cheery grate fire.

Suddenly a strange sound was heard in the corridor without. A door was heard to open and shut, there was deep breathing and inaudible strange groans.

For a few moments the millionaire sat at his desk, pallid and nerveless. Then a mighty resolution seemed to have seized him.

Tom had been aroused, and sprang up, to see his master standing in the center of the library with a heavy stick in one hand.

"Tom," he said, in a strange, guttural voice, "take that candlestick and come with me. I'll put an end to that ghost, or die!"

Tom obeyed mechanically. But as he stepped into the broad corridor he experienced a terrible chill, as if in the presence of the dead.

The candle flickered and illumined the hall for a space

about, but its light was pale and blue compared with that of another, weird and strange.

And there, not a dozen feet from them, Tom and his master beheld a spectacle which nigh froze the blood in their veins.

A door just at the angle of the corridor led into a tower chamber. This was seldom used, but now, with one hand apparently resting upon the knob, there stood a figure in white.

What it was like, Tom Taylor could never after tell. It was the likeness of a man, but like nothing earthly. In one hand there was held what seemed to be a candlestick, but the light from it was not that of wax or tallow, but more like that seen dancing in the air above cemeteries, or in ghoulish places. Tom Taylor stood trembling in the middle of the hall, but Squire Watkins, with ghastly face and blazing eyes, raised his club and started toward the mysterious presence.

"Man or devil!" he shrieked, "pursue me no longer! Death to you!"

With which he made a terrific blow at the strange presence, but the club swished through empty air, there was a strange rustling sound, and the specter was gone.

Squire Watkins, completely prostrated, was groveling upon the floor of the hall.

A thorough search of the premises was made, but nowhere could a trace be found of the strange visitor.

No amount of money could induce Tom Taylor to set foot in the Watkins mansion again. Only one servant remained with the wretched usurer, a butler, named John Dean.

One morning the butler came out of the mansion and called for help, saying his master was dead.

Weeks passed, and John Dean was the only person with Watkins in his palatial home. Vague and awful were the rumors afloat concerning the money-lender and his weird. What ensued in the old mansion those few weeks up to the hour of Watkins' death only John Dean knew, and his lips were hermetically sealed on the subject.

When the house was invaded by the police there in a chair at his desk sat Albert Watkins, a corpse. But in his stiffened fingers was a pen, and upon a sheet of paper was written a bequest restoring one hundred thousand dollars, money unlawfully taken from Herbert Lee, to his widow and children.

Many and vague were the surmises as to what scene had been enacted in Watkins' library that night. There was a report that the bequest had not been written by Watkins, but by hands not of this world. Another rumor had it that the weird had appeared and compelled the grasping usurer to write and sign the bequest.

How it all was nobody on earth ever could learn. With the death of Watkins the weird disappeared, though the story lived. Some believed it, others did not, and it went down into the past with little more credence attached than to any tradition of the kind.

The money, however, was paid to the Lees by Watkins' heirs.

Whether a superstitious fear or a sense of right caused them to do this is not known at this day.

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